

“I SHALL NEVER BE CITED AS A BAD EXAMPLE”: RELIGIOUS
IDEALIZATION AND HUMANITY IN CRUSADER FIGURES IN
THE *CHANSON DE ROLAND* AND *ROLANDSLIED*

by

Anna Samantha Lehnardt

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The thesis of Anna Samantha Lehnardt

has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

Maria Dobozy , Chair 4/24/17
Date Approved

Gerald E. Root , Member 4/24/17
Date Approved

Peter von Sivers , Member 4/24/17
Date Approved

and by Katharina Gerstenberger , Chair/Dean of

the Department/College/School of World Languages and Cultures

and by David B. Kieda, Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

This text comparatively examines the tensions at play in the figural representations of Roland and Charlemagne/Karl in the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Rolandslied*, moving away from nationalist critiques of both works. It is primarily concerned with the juxtaposition between the idealized representations of these characters and the humanity their actions and emotions expose. It considers ways in which both texts function within a pro-crusade framework and how both texts simultaneously idealize the divine work of the crusader while exposing a darker complexity that rules their actions. Taking special consideration of the *Rolandslied* as a moralizing adaptation of the Roland story, this thesis analyzes the play of multiplicity within texts, which are sometimes reduced to formulae as a result of their highly developed frameworks revealing the complexity of character, emotion, and humanity behind the simplistic crusader façade.

For Ben, who listened to me ramble through innumerable versions of this thesis, had (irrelevant but hilarious) title suggestions, and came to the rescue in a hundred ways.

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PREFACE

The Haunting Shadow of Nationalism

For seven hundred years, the Oxford manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland* was tucked away to gather dust and the elite credit of age. This has been, after all, the fate of many records and works of literature, which lie in libraries and monasteries, awaiting the discovery and celebration that may or may not come. Such was its fate until 1817, when it was rediscovered in a British archive.

Considering the *Chanson*'s tremendous popularity and ponderous weight within the literary canon, it may seem trivial to revisit its rebirth. But doing so is crucial to our conceptualization of the text itself, and especially to our understanding of the hermeneutical aura that has surrounded it. The *Chanson*, which springs to mind as *the* French national epic – the snippet of French literature that surfaces in survey classes and introductory French seminars and lies at the center of the canonical study of many a French school child – did not pass from generation to generation in the spotlight, carrying with it the very essence of what it is to be French. Instead, it was awakened from slumber by one John Josias Conybeare of Oxford (DiVanna 115) in 1817. A Brit writing in the wake of the Battle of Waterloo, Conybeare's mention of the *Chanson*, the first academic interpretation to surface, focused, not on the development of French national identity in the text, but instead on the centrality of the Battle of Roncevaux in medieval literature.

Still, the leap toward nationalism, for which the text is now so famous, often thought of simply as *the* French epic, would be taken shortly.

Amidst the nationalistic fervor of the early nineteenth century, it was only a matter of time before French scholars took possession of the text, proclaiming it central to their national identity. And indeed, this is precisely what happened. In France, the era of the Franco-Prussian war was marked by a quest for national identity, and it was not difficult to find it in Roland. By 1852, dramatist and critic Ludovic Vitet had famously proclaimed, “Roland, c’est la France!” in his critique of the piece (DiVanna 124, Vitet 864), designating Roland’s central character traits, including “blind bravery” as archetypically French. The critical designation of Roland as quintessentially French was the first step in a wave of criticism that would not only claim the title character as a national hero, but also cast his story as *the* national epic of France.

This whirlwind of nationalistic analysis was not unique to the *Chanson*. While French scholars obsessed over Roland, Germany celebrated the *Nibelungelied* and the Grimm Brothers theorized that national epics were authored, not by the one, but rather by the collection of popular songs into one narrative, creating a swirl of nationalistic fervor, imagining a type of utopian world in which the development of national identity was both tangible, traceable, and steady (Antonsen 2). Such theories assumed, not only that the entire country was engaged in the development of a “national” concept of being, but also that this effort was, in some way, inherently cohesive; that a sense of German-ness, for example, connected the oral tales and traditions of an entire people.

Literary Europe became obsessed with identity creation through national epic and folktale, even to the extent of fabrication and reinvention (Dundes 3), and the *Chanson*,

emerging as a rediscovered, *bone fide* medieval epic amidst critical obsession with the national story, took a central position in the canon that it has retained ever since. Indeed, even today, two hundred years after the rediscovery of the text, the practice of medievalists is fundamentally tied to Roland. Indeed, as Bernard Cerquiglini argued, “to be a medievalist is to take a stand on the *Chanson de Roland*” (Kinoshita 79). The text has taken such a central role, not only in France’s canon, but in that of the western medieval canon at large, that it can be said not only to dominate France’s concept of the medieval, but moreover, the world’s understanding of the period as well.

Yet, despite the multitude of criticisms and analyses of the *Chanson*, I suggest that the text has still not managed to shake the nationalist ethos that its first readers heaped upon it. I do not say this to discredit nationalist analyses of the *Chanson*; to do so would not only ignore the legitimacy of these interpretations, but also fundamentally oppose evidence within the text. (As a medieval military story, the narrative inherently focuses on the victory of the self, Charlemagne’s state, over the other – represented by Saragossa’s armies, in a manner which can be easily read as nationalist, and celebration of a European, “French” identity is not uncommon.) Indeed, it is certainly not difficult to imagine why French scholars would rush to proclaim this work, which explicitly evokes the concept of “*Douce France*” and ultimately recounts the story of French victory, as a gem of national identity (despite the fact that this term carried an entirely different weight at the time, referring only to the tiny part of France that was Roland’s place of origin). Indeed, not only has the *Chanson* become an integral part of French culture, but moreover, its place within the French canon, as an eloquent surviving medieval text of literary depth and power, is *tout à fait* natural.

What is also natural, though academically irresponsible, is to assume nationalism within the text simply because its first critics thematically proclaimed and celebrated it from the earliest days of its rediscovery. Failing to question the text's nationalism would ignore, not only the political context within which such analyses were made, but also the geographical and anthropological reality of the medieval age. In 1100, when the *Chanson* was composed, France, naturally, did not exist as a country. This is, of course, a basic, even banal, fact. Nevertheless, it is one that bears repeating when we remember that the *Chanson* has been claimed as fundamentally nationalistic. The obvious reality, bearing this small historical fact in mind, is that the text's nationalistic ethos is in large measure the product of its first reception, which took place as France, along with the rest of Europe, was striving to create some sense of cohesive nationality.

I suggest, at the risk of putting overbearing weight on basic scholarly awareness of the critical past of the *Chanson*, that understanding the full force of the initial critical forays analyzing Roland, and the extent to which they celebrated nationalism and identity within the text, is absolutely crucial to understanding the true function of the idealistic and propagandistic vein that runs through the text. Naturally, my emphasis on this point is not new. Here, I stand with Isabel DiVanna, who, in her analysis of the critical history of the *Chanson de Roland* in the nineteenth century, conceded, "[to] say that nineteenth-century historians and literary critics used their craft to manufacture a past for France is not to say anything new" (109) as she proceeded to deftly unpick the minute functions of their analysis. And yet, I suggest, that while it is not a new assertion to insist that we must be wary of our cultural assumptions of the *Chanson de Roland* if we are to produce a legitimately powerful conceptualization of the functions of the worldview and idealism it

presents, any study of the work must first begin here.

Of course, over the last two hundred years, criticism of the *Chanson* has changed. Yet, the masterfully executed ideological similitude presented in the text still begs our attention and sits at the philosophical center of any critique, as can the question of French-ness and nationalism. Indeed, whether one prefers to examine the representation of the self and the other, the development of national identity, or the translation of the classical epic into the *geste* genre, there are plenty of sweeping themes to be elucidated and critiqued within the *Chanson* itself. Recent studies of the work have justly categorized it as one that is primarily propagandistic (Giles, Stuckey) – and yet, I suggest that such sweeping interpretations of Roland draw the eye away from what may be the most striking success of the *Chanson*: There is, in fact, stark juxtaposition between the idealistic narrative and the human individuality of its characters. This humanity leads them to make their own decisions for personal reasons that sometimes stand in direct contrast to their idealized figures. This contrast illustrates the messiness of the Crusade period, perhaps more eloquently than any other existing text, historical or literary.

I suggest that if we are truly to escape the critical flatness with which criticism of the *Chanson* has been haunted ever since its birth into the genre of nationalism, we must also consider ways in which overarching themes in the text are not merely perfect constructions, but also constructions for a purpose, and constructions which, while executed well, have their exceptions. These exceptions and flaws, chinks in the veneer of perfectly orchestrated texts, may be the points of true meaning.

The Dark Horse

To this point, this introduction has focused solely on interpretations of the Old French *Chanson de Roland* as a fundamentally “French” and nationalistic text. Yet the ambition of this paper is not merely to rehash the metanarrative of the French text, but rather to consider it in relation to its lesser-known brother, Priest Konrad’s *Rolandslied*, an adaptation of the *Chanson* that emerged just roughly 70 years after the emergence of the Oxford manuscript, in 1170. Perhaps the very existence of this text throws an interesting light on the claim that Roland “c’est la France,” as he appears as something of a German folk hero in this adaptation, pious and powerful, despite the fact that the text still identifies him as a “Frank.” Of note too, is the reality that as descendants of the Holy Roman Empire, both France and Germany claim Charlemagne (or Karl der Grosse, as he is named in German), as forefather and the establisher of their kingdoms.

Indeed, while French theorists and readers may self-identify themselves as similar to Roland, he is an important figure in other cultures as well, even as he remains “French” in the texts. This can be seen in the appropriation of the story in both the *Rolandslied* and the Middle English *Song of Roulond*. As such an entity as France did not yet exist, the army is chiefly identified by its obedience to their feudal lord, Charlemagne, rather than by any sense of collective nationality, as we would perceive it today. And since both France and Germany claim Charlemagne as forebearer, one interpretation of the categorization of the crusader army as simply allegiant to Charlemagne could render their provenance fair game to either France or Germany.

With this in mind, it is worth also taking a look at the background of Konrad’s *Rolandslied* before plunging into analysis. Of course, we know relatively little about

either the author of the *Chanson* or the *Rolandslied*, but what we do know about Pfaffe Konrad is somewhat enlightening regarding the text itself, particularly its theological aspects. Dating can often be a tricky thing regarding medieval texts, and the dating and positioning of both Konrad and his adaptation of the Roland story has been debated to some extent (Wapnewski 261). But it is generally dated right at 1170, following the marriage of Konrad's patron, Duke Heinrich (widely supposed to be Henry the Lion), which Konrad mentions in the epilogue of the text, but prior Heinrich's own crusade, which occurred in 1172, and which Konrad does not mention while praising his patron (Urbanek 234). The work is highly important in the German formation of vernacular poetry in the twelfth century (Stammler, Wolfgang, and Ruh) and highly influenced by Konrad's clerical position. He cites the French original as a source throughout the text and makes it clear that he can also work in Latin, as he claims to have produced his first translation of the Roland text in Latin before reproducing it in German (9082). As a cleric, he would have had access to relevant theological texts concerning the crusades, such as transcriptions of Urban II's speech at the Council of Clermont, and that while his theology may seem simple, following the vernacular functioning of the text, he certainly would have been aware of the theological implications of his pro-crusade framework.

Konrad's text was also the first work in German that uses Karl as a literary character, and as such, had a wide impact on future portrayals of the emperor in subsequent years (Thomas 4). The portrayal of Karl as hero of the text and God's vassal on Earth is a theme in the critique of this text (Noyer-Wiedner, Stuckey), and one that this paper will also address. The *Rolandslied* was not the only German long-form poem in this period to base itself closely on the French tradition, and the creation of a German

literary tradition is certainly in play within Konrad's adaptation.

The *Rolandslied* builds on themes established in the *Chanson*. It makes even more chivalric references and explicitly shows the trust Roland and his fellow knights render their overlord, Karl, both before and during battle. Argue what we may about the stereotypically "French" aspects of Roland's character, it remains largely unedited in the German adaptation, and the *Rolandslied* stands as an interesting counterpoint to any claim that Roland is unalterably French; some changes to his actions and roles in Konrad's adaptation completely reimagine him as a Christian knight. It would be a shame were we to miss out on the manifold points of interest in this depiction by simply considering the *Chanson* in a vacuum.

The *Rolandslied* offers a fascinating comparative study in relation to the well-known *Chanson de Roland*, as it shares many of the essential bits of the original (including the movement of the basic plot, the character descriptions, and even explicit details throughout), yet drastically elaborates the religious and crusader themes of the text. It could be said that while the ideology of the *Chanson* embodies militaristic propaganda, the *Rolandslied* accomplishes the same type of ideological conformity and cohesiveness, but using religious, rather than militaristic, means. Of all the similarities the texts share, perhaps the strongest similarity lies in the cohesive idealistic frameworks they use to justify the crusade.

Both texts share a dualistic structure – they depict two sides of two battles, each led by a Christian warrior and fought against a Saracen leader. Through a deft combination of idealism and realism in the representation of the characters of Roland and Charlemagne (and beliefs and individual desires) within a masterfully established crusade

framework, these texts present a bizarre and striking balance between idealism and individualism that, if properly analyzed and understood, can lend great understanding to our conceptualization of the crusades as they were perceived by contemporary authors.

Traditionally, attempts to understand the Crusaders have fallen in one of several camps: Some subscribe to the “loot” theory – that the crusades were largely fought by younger sons in search of wealth and fame. Others promote the “lemming” theory, a historical view that promotes the analysis of religious sermons and fervor at the time, suggesting that crusaders deeply believed that the end of the world was drawing near and they could secure their salvation by participation in God’s War. Still others promote the “elite” theory, a simple analysis suggesting that feudal ties were the big recruiters for the crusade and that crusades that took off for the Holy Land without elite royal leadership were destined to fail. The “loot” theory has been largely discarded (Madden 13), but it is worth bearing in mind here primarily because it brings to mind the material drive for the crusade – and as the crusades were doubtless the result of a combination of religious, economic, social, and political factors, I believe that the very best historical conceptualizations of the crusades take all of these explanations into account in any attempt to understand the crusade movement. And while these texts are doubtless constructed around a highly idealistic framework, I suggest that there is something more at work behind this simple generality. While both of these texts present and utilize religious ideology to justify the crusade and venerate the French warriors, they also present the complications of these wars and the individuals that fought in them with a success that is difficult to achieve, even amongst historical analyses of these events.

Seeing Beyond the Blinders of Idealism

As this suggests, both the Middle High German and Old French versions of the Roland story are, indeed, full of textual details and monologues that perpetuate the idealistic conceptualization of Charlemagne's battle against the Muslims in an ideological manner. There is, in fact, a proverbial Kool-Aid at play within the texts – one which characters do, indeed, drink. But the dualistic worldviews these frameworks advocate are, in and of themselves, subverted by a powerful counterpart in both texts – that of humanity.

The purpose of this thesis is not to thoroughly negate nationalistic readings, but rather to suggest that the idealistic aspect of the text has a much more powerful function than that of being simply a type of literary attempt at radicalization, for either nationalistic or religious purposes. I suggest, instead, that these texts, which stand at risk of being read as merely idealistic and nationalistic, contain subversive elements that fundamentally succeed in illustrating the chaotic mess of carrying out a crusade; that regardless of its actual historical accuracy (the *Chanson*, while loosely inspired by historical events of the eighth century, uses the historical background more as a means of processing the contemporaneous issue of the First Crusade, rather than attempting any kind of slavish adherence to historical fact), the text makes a brave attempt to present the chaotic and inexplicable reality of existence within a crusader army and the complications and impossibility of perfect radicalization, both militaristically and religiously.

The succinct ideology in the *Chanson* and the *Rolandslied* that garners so much attention is, in fact, only part of the story. And indeed, it is a very flashy one – the belief

system shared by the soldiers in Charlemagne's army prompts them to barrel headfirst into incredibly violent conflict with an inner peace that can be not only startling, but flat-out bizarre to modern readers. It can be easy to overlook any type of individuality within this early form of mechanized warfare, to assume that, for lack of sophisticated army technology, thousands of warriors were radicalized and mobilized to fight without doubt or thought. But this is simply not the case. At their very core, the *Chanson* and *Rolandslied* masterfully exhibit the gap between ideology and individuality.

We may look to the *Chanson de Roland* or the *Rolandslied* with the expectation that they will *explain* the inexplicable horror of the crusades; but if we truly understand the subversive juxtaposition between individual and ideology throughout these texts, we get a glimpse of humanity that suggests the inner battle within these crusading characters: people who experience many of the soul-wrenching complications of crusades and who are driven to commit unspeakable acts of violence by innumerable factors.

Method and Organization

This thesis will analyze the tension between ideology and individuality, within the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Rolandslied* by carefully examining the representations of the idealized crusade army for the purposes of establishing the idealistic framework, then by closely investigating the figures of Roland and Charlemagne. With a chapter devoted to each of the two main characters, each in his own right a simultaneously idealized and flawed, human subject, this paper will first analyze the establishment of the pro-crusade framework within the texts through the idealization of character, and the perpetuation of individual humanity, revealing the complicated gap between the ideological

conceptualization of the crusade and individualized, harsh, human reality depicted in the text.

The first chapter will be dedicated to the representations of the crusade and establishment of the ideological framework through the generalized depiction of the crusade and crusaders. Following the chronology of the narrative, the second chapter will address the idealization of Roland in contrast to his more human traits, while the final chapter will perform a similar task in analyzing the highly religious, yet highly emotive and human persona of Charlemagne and Karl within these texts. Together, careful analysis of the representation of crusaders in these texts will expose the ways in which the framework of simple idealization lies at odds with their individuality and the messy reality of war, exposing the truth that even in the most idealized and propagandized of conflicts, humanity exists beneath the mechanized workings of idealism and narrative, fueling and sabotaging the war by turns and suggesting a take on the crusades that is more complicated than generalized conceptualization.

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CHAPTER 1

ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CRUSADE FRAMEWORK

The first step in understanding the tension between idealism and the individual at play in both the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Rolandslied* is understanding the framework that the texts present to the audience. This chapter will first analyze the establishment of the crusade framework within the texts and the idealized representation of the crusader army, before the rest of the thesis will delve into the question of how the individual crusaders may be seen as either idealistic exemplars fighting for Christ or flawed humans with complex motivations.

Both the *Chanson* and the *Rolandslied* produce and operate within a framework that functions on a base level of terms and identifiers used to refer to two groups, the Christians and the Pagans (Dobozý “Meaning” 1), a division that clearly supports the establishment of a crusade framework. Indeed, it is for precisely this reason that both texts are generally accepted as crusade narratives in their respective literary canons, despite the fact that they recount a fictionalized version of an encounter that took place more than two hundred years before the First Crusade (Dobozý “Theme” 341). As the analysis of the centrality of salvation and Christianity in these texts is dependent on the assumption that both texts function as crusade texts, it is necessary to first build a solid

conceptualization of the extent to which the appellation of “crusade narrative” applies in each case. I suggest that the categorization is relevant in both cases, but that Konrad’s adaptation of the tale further moralizes both the characters and the battles they fight, more explicitly framing them as a crusade and crusaders, respectively, and directly driving home an ideological framework promising salvation to the crusader, exploiting the theme previously developed in the *Chanson*.

First, let us examine, in brief summation, what the texts have in common. Of all the stances and positions that have been taken on the *Chanson*, “the poem’s cast[ing of] the Saracens as a fierce and intractable Other” has long and for good reason stood beyond debate (Kinoshita 79). It is crucial to note that this delineation is the direct result of intentional storytelling that reimagined the Battle of Roncevaux Pass in 778, in which a part of the Charlemagne’s army was attacked by a party of Basques. The *Chanson* and *Rolandslied* retell this narrative within the context of the First Crusade, for which Pope Urban II issued a call in 1095, just five years before the dated emergence of the *Chanson* and 75 years before the *Rolandslied* (Thomas 2). This propagandistic positioning does not rely on a large leap of imagination; as the historical ambush took place in the high passes of the Pyrenees following Charlemagne’s invasions of Spain, it fit well into an imagined Reconquista framework, in addition to ascribing to the myth that Charlemagne successfully campaigned in the Holy Land, a myth which became increasingly popular during the crusade age.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the narrative takes considerable liberties to transform the historical attack into one worthy of literary record (Ross 178). Indeed, the *Chanson* does, to an extent, completely reimagine the historical event, as “the Spanish

aggressors in the Battle of Roncevaux Pass in the mountains of the Pyrenees became Muslim Saracens whereas they were Christian Basques” (Boyacioglu 592) in reality. Of course, the ethnic recasting of Charlemagne’s foe in the *Chanson* is not the only anachronism – Boyacioglu’s article “The Historical Anachronism in *The Song of Roland*” outlines the artistic liberties Troubadours took with the historical events of 778, freely imagining it as a battle against pagans instead of fellow Christians, and similarly misconstruing Muslims as worshippers of Mohomet and Apollo (491). Furthermore, as Ross points out, numerous scholars have questioned the “historicity of Roland” at all (Ross 172). Indeed, historians have debated inconsistencies in the *Chanson* that point to battle tactics that ought not to have been used in such steep terrain, and indeed, even the shining metal depicted on the pagan army, though a well-known trope in crusade literature, may well be anachronistic, as historical accounts show that Muslim warfare was generally not as fitted to heavy armor as the Western model (Asbridge 58) and relied largely upon skilled horsemen who could fire arrows with deadly aim while moving at breakneck speed. This essay, of course, is not dedicated to the anachronisms already outlined by historians and literary scholars; in fact, it is enough, in this instance, that they *exist*. The manipulations the authors chose to take as they framed the Roland legend as a series of battles between Christians and Pagans serve in and of themselves as evidence of the deliberate establishment of a crusade framework. The author of the *Chanson* did not *have* to tell a story about the conflict between Christian and Pagan; he *chose* to tell this story. Within the context of the new crusade movement at the turn of the 12th century, the author of the original *Chanson* carefully constructed a framework around existing legend to entice his modern, crusade-aware audience, imbedding its narrative with ideology that

denigrates the Muslim other and venerates the Christian self.

While the mere delineation between Christian and Muslim (more frequently referenced as “pagan” within both texts), is a crucial part of the establishment of the crusade framework, it is not the only element of the established worldview. Indeed, both texts elaborate on the crusade motif, consistently relying on a dualistic framework which venerates the Christian and condemns the pagan, establishing an Augustinian view of good and evil in which the Christians are good because of their proximity to God, while the pagans are evil because of their distance from Him (Morris 83). The crusaders are concerned with doing God’s will, thus preserving their status as close to God, and there are moments in which Karl, in particular, is portrayed as being fundamentally concerned with saving his enemies’ souls. The French Charlemagne, too, shows a similar impulse, reflected in his injunction at the beginning of the *Chanson* that “[u]ncore purrat guarir” (40) in reference to Marsile’s offer to convert suggests that there is indeed an impulse toward crusade and conversion. The definition of the war as a crusade is amplified, however, in Konrad’s adaptation, which begins by stating that “uor gote ist er, want er mit gote uberwant uil manige heidinske land” (12-14), rendering it absolutely clear that Charlemagne has received the heavenly salvation Konrad celebrates in the beginning of the text through his conquest of heathen lands. Though the text goes on to more explicitly document Charlemagne as a saintly character in preparation for his eventual ascent to heaven, it is utterly essential that the text itself asserts the cause for this reward from the very opening lines, which act as a thesis for the rest of the epic – and that the cause for his wonderful reward can be reduced to a simple statement: Charlemagne went to heaven because he conquered heathens. Even more simply: Charlemagne went to heaven because

he was a crusader. In one aspect, these texts define crusading as conquering these lands, but in fact, the definition is broader. Crusading is, simply put, doing God's will. Both texts represent Charlemagne as a conqueror of lands and of heathens, although the Christianized motivation of Charlemagne as ruler exists differently within the texts, and will be discussed in the third chapter. For now, we will proceed simply to the establishment of the crusade and the introduction of the crusader army.

The *Chanson* begins *in medias res*, as Charlemagne has already been in Spain for “seven long years” (2) and much of the land has been conquered in the campaign; Saragossa alone stands left to be captured (6). This lone city is home to King Marsile, a pagan king “ki Deu nen aimet” (7), who is desperately trying to negotiate peace for his own city and men. The author's descriptor of Marsile here reveals not only that Marsile does not honor God (by being a Christian), but that he does not love God, explicitly establishing the affront of heathendom within the framework of the narrative, and establishing him as evil, according to Augustinian thought. Moreover, this explicit description of Marsile as pagan sets up the Christian vs. Pagan paradigm previously alluded to in the very first strophe of the text. The emphasis here is on the power given to those who follow God, which is so great that Charlemagne's army has been able to capture a vast area of land, fortress after fortress falling before the emperor's feet until “mur ne citet n'I est remés à fraindre” (5), clearly emphasizing the power of the Christian warriors.

If we take the emphasis on the militaristic descriptions of might at face value, it might seem that the enemy is almost coincidentally heathen in this text; while Charlemagne has certainly conquered pagan lands in this Reconquista, the emphasis in

the opening lines of the epic is placed more securely on his acquisition of territory than on the spilling of pagan blood. Conversion is briefly mentioned, as the narrative specifies that no pagans are spared his army's attacks unless they choose to convert (101-102), but even these lines put more emphasis on the *possession* of the cities and the acquisition of wealth than on the import of forced baptism. We do not hear of the mass baptisms that supposedly might have occurred under threat of the sword in the *Chanson*, (though we do hear of them in the *Rolandslied*), but we do hear about looting, as Charlemagne's knights' enormous booty is described in verses 99-101, including "d'or e d'argent e de guarnemenz cherz" (100), a detailed chronicling that clearly shows the import of booty within the realm of power. Both texts, indeed, describe the Pagan as wealthy, but the *Chanson* tends to praise the acquisition of wealth and territory as cause for war more than the *Rolandslied*, which begins with much more emphasis on conversion despite the fact that the story itself narrates more of a slaughter than a conversion of peoples.

The *Rolandslied*, by contrast, takes even more painstaking efforts to establish a crusade framework, beginning its narrative before Karl's conquest of Spain: Konrad boasts that he has conquered "manige heidinske land" (14-15), alluding to the myths of Karl's campaigns in the Holy Land, but he has not yet entered Spain. By positioning Karls's campaign in Spain within an even larger context of previous campaigns fought against heathens in the Holy Land, Konrad takes the original, already explicit crusader framework one step further; this war in Spain is in absolutely no way accidentally religious – it is one of many religious campaigns. The original *Chanson* created the fictional Muslim enemy, but here Konrad alludes to multiple Muslim enemies in the "heidinske" lands (15), solidifying the antiheathen, antipagan war within the context of a

larger campaign for Christ. Although the *Rolandslied*, in this way, also begins with Karl's army already caught up in the middle of a war that they ought to win, for God's sake, Konrad makes the audience privy to the beginnings of the conflict in Spain. We are allowed to listen as Karl begs God for a chance to serve God and save souls, prompting an angel to call him to campaign in Spain. The *Chanson* implies, in structure and literal battle cries, that the campaign against the Saracens is the will of God; Konrad shows God's angelic messenger, fundamentally proving, as it were, that this crusade is the will of God, and solidifying its justness with the brief cameo of a winged messenger. Here, Konrad adds a moment that clearly reveals God's will; the audience does not simply need to believe the crusaders will be doing what God wants, as Konrad shows this explicitly with the entrance of the angel. In creating a visible manifestation of God's will that Karl go on a crusade, Konrad goes even one step further in propagandizing the crusade framework, structurally removing doubt as to the divine purpose of the war by playing the metaphorical trump card: God himself.

Both texts establish a framework in which the crusaders are characterized as not just Christian, but also model Christians, fundamentally establishing a model to be followed by crusader knights. The clearest and simplest example of this characterization, perhaps, lies in the physical layout of Charlemagne's court, which is reproduced in Konrad's adaptation. Charlemagne is, naturally, at the head, and he is advised and supported by 12 peers, a number which is in no way coincidental. Here, the 12 peers frame Charlemagne as the 12 apostles framed Christ's ministry. Like Christ's apostles, they are fiercely loyal, with the exception of one (Judas/Ganelon), who betrays them into the hands of the enemy (Nelting 206). In the *Rolandslied*, the comparison of the 12 peers

to the 12 apostles is especially explicit, as Charlemagne offers them the same rewards Christ promised his 12 apostles. Furthermore, the narrator's description defines them as crusaders in the terms that would have been familiar at the time. The narrator describes them thus:

[S]ine gerten nichtis mere
 wan durh got isterbin,
 daz himelriche mit der martire irwerben.
 der Kaiser in do sagete,
 daz er willen habete,
 die haidenschaft zerstoren,
 di cristin gemeren (80-86).

Indeed, this description, which focuses entirely on their willingness, nay thirst, to die as martyrs for Christ, positions the 12 peers not merely as good warriors, but more specifically as men who have already been called to the crusade (Brault "The Twelve Peers" 42). They not only have the potential to desire martyrdom for Christ, but in fact, want it more than anything else, and want only to fight for Christendom and defeat heathens. This description stands in stark contrast to the first description of the peers in the *Chanson*, in which they are seen engaging in knightly fencing and noble board games, "as tables juent pur els esbaneier, e as eschecs li plus saive e li veil, e escremissent cil bachelor leger" (8), representing the very picture of the odd mixture of serenity, amusement, and manliness that seems to have made up the concept of the medieval knight. It is worth noting, subsequently, that the description of the peers lounging and playing chess is used in the *Rolandslied* as well, in almost direct citation, but it happens later in the text, suggesting that while Konrad chose to include the board-game moment in the text, he explicitly did not want it to serve as the audience's introduction to the 12 peers, and he instead invented a new, more religiously radical introduction to the heroes

of his text, taking time to laud them as perfect emissaries and warriors for Christ before letting the audience view them in such a pedestrian light, relaxing in their camp.

The *Chanson* certainly depicts the peers as “worthy” (227) and willing to fight (753) as well, but Konrad takes these largely secular noble attributes and transforms the peers into models of specifically Christian knighthood in the *Rolandslied*. His description also closely parallels the ideals set down in Fulcher of Chartres’ record of Pope Urban II’s speech at the Council of Clermont in 1095, in which he promised, “[a]ll who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins. This I grant them through the power of God with which I am invested” (Bongars 517). In many accounts of Urban’s speech, the promise of salvation for martyrs who died on armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem serves as the grand finale of a speech studded with injunctions to follow the command of God’s will and take up the cross, offering salvation as the great bargaining chip to convince men to come unto Christ in the crusade (it should be noted that Fulcher of Chartres’ chronicle is by no means the only record, nor even the only detailed record of the speech. Most convey similar themes and messages, but each chronicler represents the oration slightly differently. We have no actual copy of the exact speech given by the Pope at Clermont.) Such an argument is no doubt compelling, and may have seemed even more so within the context of a world in which men had felt damned by their very natures. In such a world, even the price of death must have seemed a bargain to pay for the salvation.

Historically, of course, this matter is much more complicated. It is impossible to conjecture how many of the knights that went out to fight crusades did so because they actually believed in Urban’s offer, and indeed, historical accounts and data suggest that

such a simple explanation of the popularity of the crusades is, in fact, overly simplistic and does not take into account the many purposes for which crusaders answered the call to head eastward to the Holy Land, including, but not limited to, the opportunity for self-promotion and wealth, the allure of fame and success, and the simple desire to go to war, to say nothing of the flurry of preaching that promised crusaders that they could conceivably wash themselves of all sin by participating in God's war. With this in mind, Konrad's evocation of the rhetoric in Urban's speech and his ideological and propagandistic promotion of martyrdom for Christ might be an attempt to convince the audience to have faith in Urban's offer of salvation, but in any case, Konrad takes the ideological side with Urban, and his narrative relies upon a framework that claims that martyrdom will ensure salvation – a belief that is firmly shared by all 12 of the peers.

Indeed, as a cleric, Konrad certainly would have been familiar with the pope's injunctions offered almost a century before the production of his adaptation of the *Rolandslied*. He certainly read an account, most likely Fulcher of Chartres' version, as the clergy did have access to these texts. The citations of the speech also suggest the popularity of the pope's speech, which seems to have captured the Western European imagination in the call for the first crusades. For, indeed, this is not the only similarity in the qualification of the Spanish war, which explicitly points to the pope's speech. The most notorious sections of Urban's speech, which inspired countless hoards to take off for the Middle East in search of vengeance of injustices, claimed heathens had "killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire" (Bongars 516). In direct parallel, Charlemagne tells his men that heathens "ritent in diu lant. Si stiftint rub unde brant. Di gotes hús si storent" (201-203), implying a direct threat

toward Christendom in the form of the heathen. Such accusatory assertions from the pope were flame to kindling during the crusades; for Charlemagne, these assertions serve the very same purpose, and his men do not hesitate to put their arms together and become soldiers for Christ.

It is in this fashion that Konrad idealizes both the war and the soldiers that fight in it, repositioning them, respectively, as a divine war, and soldiers that border on divinity. Indeed, the difference between the peers as initially presented in the *Chanson* and in Konrad cannot be overemphasized, as both depictions are key to the presentation of each text as a whole. The *Chanson* tends to represent the peers as normal men. In vein with their playing chess and backgammon under the shade of a tree in their initial introduction in the *Chanson*, they do not seem superhuman, despite their great strength. Buschinger suggests that this is a consistent theme in the *Chanson*, while Konrad's adaptation consistently idealizes the figures within a religious context (101), and indeed, their introductions to the audience make this strikingly apparent. While the Franks happily sit, relaxing and calm, at the beginning of the *Chanson*, only moments away from engaging in a council that is sure to go awry (179), Karl's peers (though they *are* sleeping when they are first introduced) are shown as already existing within an exalted state. Before they are even exhorted to go to Spain, they have a deep desire within their hearts to depart on a crusade and be martyred for Christ. Their souls delight at the chance to be placed in the "martyr's choir, that shines with the brightness of the morning star" (104-105).

This description positions them, not only as the ideal crusaders that doubtless any historical king would have rejoiced to have amongst his ranks en route to the Middle

East, but also as worthy and spiritually prepared for a martyr's salvation, a fate that Konrad's Roland, unlike his French predecessor will run *toward* with enthusiasm.

While both texts can be seen as crusade texts, this thesis will seek to construct a deeper understanding of how these texts function

CHAPTER 2

ROLAND AS CHRISTIAN EXEMPLAR AND IMPETUOUS HERO

The years following Pope Urban II's speech at the Council of Clermont introduced a drastic reimagining of the chevalier and fighting classes. In response to Alexius Comnenus' request for men to help defend Byzantium against the impending threat of the Seljuk Turks, he received, not the impressive array of mercenary soldiers he had expected, but instead a rag-tag group of warriors, ranging from peasant to knight. Rallying such an unorganized group was certainly not Urban's intention when he preached the call to a crusade – indeed, his speech suggests he had something more idealistic in mind.

Fulcher of Chartres' account of the speech reveals that Urban explicitly addressed the reformation of knights in his speech at Clermont:

Let those who have been accustomed unjustly to wage private warfare against the faithful now go against the infidels and end with victory this war which should have been begun long ago. Let those who, for a long time, have been robbers, now become knights. Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians (Bongars 517).

This section of his speech introduces a concept that was central to both the construction of Urban's speech and his justification and plan for the Crusades: He hoped to Christianize the knight, fundamentally transforming chivalry. While Urban may have intended to reinvent the knight into a mechanized warrior for Christ, reality was not so

simple. Not all knights pledged to the crusades, and while the People's Crusade, filled with people of all walks of life, including a large number of women, certainly did not fill the demographic Urban had hoped to attract, the rest of the crusades continued to attract an odd mixture of people, even as heads of houses and fiefdoms signed on to the cause.

Historically, it is crucial that we recognize the gap between Urban's conceptualization of the crusaders he called for and the reality of the men his call rallied. He imagined that he could, in one stroke, solve the problem of infighting amongst the knights of Europe, whose code of chivalry placed honor on the heads of killers in tournaments and promoted continued aggression between neighboring fiefdoms, rather than subduing it (Madden 11). Europe was still reeling from years and even generations of fighting the imposing Normans, and at least the noble classes were struggling to adjust to an age of peace, as they were *the* warrior class. Urban's speech suggests that he believed he could transform sword-happy knights into soldiers for Christ. He specifically explained this hope in the proclamation, "Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians" (Bongars 517). Problematic as even this solution would have been, as it basically aimed to transplant the violence from the homeland to the margins of the world and trading murder amongst like peoples for the eradication of barbarians, this was, in fact, not what happened during the Crusades.

An oversimplified formulation of the Crusades might suggest that the war-waging Norman chevalier was easily transformed into the herald and symbol of Christendom during this period. This may have been Urban's idealistic hope when he preached the Council at Clermont, but an accurate and responsible conceptualization of chivalry during

the Middle Ages acknowledges that the chivalric code was not so much the romanticized set of knightly virtues, but a set of beliefs that systematically integrated and applauded violence (*Chivalry and Violence*, 7). We must fundamentally challenge the literary concept of virtuous knights in shining armor doing only good deeds, which began to formulate in crusade texts like this and was further realized in chivalric romance. Such a concept of the medieval knight is both oversimplified and overcharacterized. Real chivalry was a messy business: It was essentially rooted in violence, partially for purposes of survival and partially for sport alone. There is a stark difference between both the oversimplified version of these knights and Urban's conceptualization of their magnificent transformation through his Christianizing plan of what the knight ought to be, as represented in his speech and crusader knights themselves, even as presented as texts that propagandize the crusades. Indeed, historical analysis, as well as the contemporary observations of Anna Comnena of Constantinople, certainly suggest that the crusaders of reality were not nearly so polished as Urban's ideal (Comnena 99).

The Roland texts are brilliant examples of the general function of the chivalric order, progressively displaying the actions and thoughts of the peers in general, then of Roland and Olivier as leading knights within the court, and finally of the lord of the fiefdom, Charlemagne, to whom all fealty and obedience is rendered. This chapter will primarily consider the ways in which the texts process the "Christianization" of the knight through the figure of Roland (Farrier 61). Consistent with both the pattern in the text and the project of this thesis, the authors of the *Chanson* and the *Rolandslied* establish a grand idealistic standard for crusades, knights, and lords. It is as if they are establishing a role model, a propagandistic ideal to stand as the exemplar and cover up

doubts and questions, and yet they subtly contradict this, exposing a more complicated view of the crusaders' humanity through the actions of the figures within the texts.

As in the previous case of the crusade and its warriors in general, we must first consider the ways in which the ideals are set up, and in what manner they function, if we are to understand the individual reality that exists behind the veneer of idealism.

The idealism of the representation of Roland as hero, and his ultimate downfall often lead to an accurate interpretation of him as a tragic hero, and indeed, he does fall in both the *Chanson* and in the *Rolandslied*, but in a different fashion altogether. I suggest that while it is entirely accurate and appropriate to interpret Roland as a tragic hero, especially in the *Chanson*, dismissing his figure as nothing more deprives us of a deeper understanding of both his idealistic excellence and the eloquent drive for individuality that the text exposes inside him.

In the *Chanson*, Roland is sometimes conceived of as such an idealistic, Greek hero, that he may be wrongly perceived as irreligious, or his religious motivations for fighting may seem to merely consist of a tonic of fervor typical of the classic hero, created to spur a warrior to do what he does best: Kill. It would be impossible to make such a mistake with Konrad's Roland, who is exceptionally religious, and stands in many ways as *the* ideal Christian knight, as we will find later in this chapter. But indeed, it is crucial to acknowledge some level of Christian spiritualism, even in the original Roland of the *Chanson*, as indicated when Roland clearly cites in his own declaration of merits and duties the duties of a good vassal before going into battle:

Ben devuns ci estre pur nostre rei:
Pur sun seignor deit hom susfrir destreiz
E endure e granz chalz e granz freiz,
Sin deit hom perdre e del quir e del peil.

O quart chascuns que granz colps i empleit
 Que malvaïse cançon de nus chantet ne seit!
 Païen unt tort e chrestïens unt dreit.
 Malvaïse essample n'en serat ja de mei (1009-1016).

Naturally, he includes aspects of knightly duty that would have been obvious requirements for the vassal even before the great reimagining of knighthood that came with Urban's call to the Crusades, but it is crucial that the apex of his announcement, the final note to his explanation is the exclamation "Pagans are wrong and Christians are right" (1008), which simultaneously serves to establish the dualism within the world of the *Chanson* and the battle about to be fought (Kinoshita 84) but furthermore asserts that vassals must do all the good things required of them – such as suffering for their lord, as well as "enduring great heat and great cold" (1010-1111), tasks which, interestingly, have their own Christian parallels – just as Christ suffered on the cross, the good Christian must suffer for Christ – *because*, as Christians they are right, and Pagans are wrong. In short, the knight must suffer all these things, not merely because they are part of a required list in the unwritten code of chivalry (David 480), but moreover because they are part of being a good Christian, and enacting these requirements satisfactorily is the mark of a good member of the faith.

It is no coincidence that the traits described by Roland line up so perfectly with the Christian ideal of suffering for Christ in the earthly veil of tears – indeed, an argument can be made that this citation shows that even the *Chanson's* Roland shows a certain level of the Christian commitment that appears to have become the ideal for Christian crusader knights during the 12th century. As a noble knight at the very height of prestige within Charlemagne's court, we might suppose that he might not have been one of the ever-warring knights causing the problems elucidated in Urban's speech, although

this would necessarily ignore much of what we know about the fundamental violence of medieval knighthood (Kaeuper 12). Still, he seems, at this point, to comply well with the overarching narrative ideal, standing in as a knight who already shows signs of viewing Christian obedience as an integral part of his knightly duties. Cleric Konrad, as was his wont in his adaptation of the song, more explicitly Christianizes Roland after the manner prescribed by Urban II and transforms him from normal knight to idealized crusader (Buschinger 101).

Konrad made a few fundamental alterations in his adaptation, to both character and plot, in order to represent Roland as his conceptualization of the ideal Christian knight. To establish Konrad's formulation of the Christianized ideal, we will consider a number of these alterations, largely chronologically, beginning with his introduction of Roland to the audience, moving toward the insertion of a communion service offered before the Battle of Roncevaux, and most monumentally, in examining the ways in which he reimagines his tragic death as what could perhaps best be described as a glorious martyrdom. This adaptation, which I argue is the most significant of all the changes Konrad made to the text, required considerable rewriting and essentially relies on the Christian idealism and ideology of the text working well, as it requires the reader to ultimately buy into a religious order that can comfortably celebrate, rather than lament, Roland's death, central, though he is as a character. This change relied on Konrad's utter reformulation of Roland as a knight primarily concerned with the welfare of his soul, instead of with glory, or even knightly duty. Here, we encounter a space where these texts greatly diverge, despite the fact that they are both committed to produce idealistic frameworks that venerate a Crusade. The *Chanson*'s Roland is obsessed with the type of

earthly honor that Christ would have condemned in the New Testament, as those that moth or rust could corrupt, or thieves could break through or steal (Matthew 6:20), whereas Konrad's Roland is concerned with one thing: Where he stands with God.

We first meet the Roland of the *Chanson* following the arrival of King Marsile's emissaries to Charlemagne's camp, moments after they have made the extravagant offer of exotic animals and riches they had concocted to tease out Charlemagne's acquiescence to leave their lands. The detailed account of gift-giving practices the author of the *Chanson* includes here serves as yet another nod to the idealized and performed world of chivalric codes, as the Saracens incorporate the courtly offering of gold and goods with their fictional offer to convert to Christianity. Charlemagne turns to his men for council, and the hotheaded Roland cannot even bear to stay seated on hearing the account of the emissaries' offer, standing and exclaiming, "Ja mar crerez Marsile!" (196). He then goes on to list the many lands he has conquered on behalf of Charlemagne, reminding him that Marsile has tried this trick before, tempting him with his offer to convert, only to turn on him and kill the two diplomats Charlemagne had sent back to him. Roland, brave but impulsive, charges the emperor with another tactic altogether, proposing revenge: "Metez le sege a tute vostre vie, si vengez cels que li fels fist ocreire!" (214-215). His thirst for revenge clearly displays his own motivation and method of regarding Marsile's offer. Of course, Marsile's offer is a red herring, meant to bribe Charlemagne and remove him from his territory and save his city, but although Roland understands this, his main concern is not the lie itself, but the necessity of avenging the two knights who had already been killed in negotiations with Marsile.

Vengeance itself is both a crucial part of this story and a complicated virtue

within the Christian chivalric framework; in the *Chanson*, at least, it may function merely on the level of an epic warrior value, but in the Christianized *Rolandslied*, the question becomes more complicated. Vengeance itself is complicated within the Christian framework alone, allowed within the Old Testament, but condemned by Christ, who advocated quelling the desire for vengeance, saying, “whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 6:39). It is useful here to consider the words of Urban II at the Council at Clermont, who after recounting the (albeit imaginary) atrocities committed by the pagans, urged the Christians to “destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends” (Bongars 517), clearly advocating some kind of revenge as well, ignoring the injunction of Christ.

It is worth noting here that while Roland *is* hotheaded and impulsive in this scene – as he is generally acknowledged to be (“Roland, c’est la France”), he is *correct* in his suspicion and is essentially acting as a good council, despite his emotion. And while his impulsiveness will prove to be his fatal flaw in the *Chanson*, consistent with the model off the classic hero with a tragic flaw, at least in this instance, it seems somewhat appropriate, as he is desperately trying to protect his emperor, uncle, and liege from the wiles of a cunning opponent. He is not unlike the Apostle Peter, who impulsively cut off the ear of a Roman soldier moving to arrest his Lord. When it comes to allegiance and fealty to his Lord, Roland is enthusiastic to the point of fury, which is fundamentally complicated, as fury is a capital sin in the Christian framework. In this scene, Roland exhibits a complicated sense of behaviors and emotions which simultaneously fit and do not fit into the concept of what makes a good Christian knight.

Contrast this with Konrad’s introduction of Roland, which occurs very shortly

after the Kaiser has seen an angel and goes to proclaim the Crusade to the 12 peers, who favorably receive Charlemagne's announcement that they will shortly have the opportunity of winning a throne in the heavenly choir of martyrs (103-104). While Roland will later play the exact role as he did in the *Chanson*, doubting the integrity of the Saracen messengers, Konrad chooses to give him another moment in the spotlight first; fundamentally altering the way the audience will perceive his character. In this scene, not a single knight turns away from the call to battle, longing to do "swaz si durch got wolten bestan" (143). All of the peers acquiesce to go to battle, with the express knowledge that they may well be martyred – indeed this seems, for many, to act as incentive instead of as discouragement, as they look forward to earning their place in heaven. It is in *this* context, as the peers are fully cognizant of their need and desire to *win* a place in God's kingdom, through their deeds, that we first meet Roland in the *Rolandslied*.

Before moving on to further analysis of this scene, it is worth taking a brief moment to note the linguistic and religious ramifications of a term used in this scene and the general worldview of the German text regarding the formulation of an ideal. The Middle High German lexical expression frequently used here and throughout the text to express heavenly salvation is worth a moment's careful pause; Konrad states in the opening paragraph that he will describe "wie [Karl] daz gotes reiche gewan" (10), literally, how Charlemagne won his place in God's Kingdom. Throughout the text, the antiquated form of the verb *gewinnen* is used repeatedly near the word *Himmelrieche* or *Königskrone* (10; 103-104, etc.) to indicate achieving salvation. Certainly, the verb *gewinnen* does carry the connotation of mere obtainment, but it also carries connotations

of winning and gaining, so that while the German expression, *das Himmelreich gewinnen* may literally mean “to obtain salvation” it could also carry the connotation of earning, or winning salvation, a distinction that fundamentally reveals a religious belief that conceptualizes salvation as achieved by deeds, again reflecting the Augustinian concept that good works are important, despite the role of grace (Augustine 3-7). In effect, the use of this lexical expression in the German reveals that the crusaders *are* in control of their fates within this framework, rather than by salvation and grace alone, as would later be advocated in the Lutheran view. The religious question of the necessity of works, which has proved to be the center of religious debate for centuries within the realm of Christianity, is taken as a given in this text, and functions beautifully in a text where Christians literally believe they can win their spot in heaven through martyrdom for Christ in battle – a new type of martyrdom that was initiated with the advent of the crusades.

Not only is Roland introduced in this passage as a knight who will consent to willingly give his life for his God, but he is the first of the peers to step up and speak for the battle, promising his fellows great praise and joy in heaven if they fight for God, just as Charlemagne had previously extolled them only moments earlier. He cries,

Wi salic der geborn wart,
 Der nu dise heruart
 Geruömit willichliche!
 Dem lonet got mit sineme riche
 Des mager grozen trost han (147-151),

making a stand and reassuring his men, not with his bravery, but with his faith. The first time Konrad introduces his Roland, he invents an opportunity for him to bear testimony of God’s promises to the faithful, instead of having him campaign for revenge. By not

only changing, but also inventing a new introduction for Roland which stands in complete juxtaposition to the *Chanson*'s vengeful offering, Konrad completely recasts Roland's character from the first stroke, making his call to arms more of a spiritual testimony than a war cry, let alone the vengeful war cry that the *Chanson* gives as introduction.

Konrad chooses not to use the council scene to introduce Roland in his adaptation, but he does include it later. In an entirely invented prelude to the original narrative included in the *Chanson*, Konrad takes his time establishing the call for a crusade, as well as its subsequent success, before settling in on Saragossa as the lone surviving city of the crusade, he does include the scene in which Roland gives his advice regarding Marsile's emissaries. He does, however, rewrite Roland's speech, reimagining it to fit the new, Christian character he has fashioned for Roland. Instead of calling for revenge, Konrad's Roland speaks more as a strategic missionary, waging his bets that Marsile will not actually convert to Christianity, and considering the best tactical approach to ensure Christianity's survival.

As in the French, he jumps to his feet, reminding the council that Marsile has promised so much because he has much to gain from the negotiation (911-912), but he continues, explaining what Marsile is most likely to do as soon as the Kaiser's army has departed from Spain: "[a]lso wir in entwichen, so richtent si uf Mahmeten, so geweldigent si lant unde stete. So richsenot Marsile, die cristinheit geliget nidere" (920-924). Thus, as in the *Chanson*, Roland is the first to spring from his feet and forewarn the emperor against believing King Marsile's tempting offer. But Konrad utterly transforms his motivations, giving him the wisdom to assert that once the Christians have departed, it

is unlikely that Christianity will remain the religion in the area – indeed, it is almost certain that the people will return to their own religion and customs.

Here, Roland is clever enough to see how circumspect Marsile's offer is, but he is also a good Christian and is fixated on spreading his religion. Of course, it is essential to note that there is nothing inherently evil about Roland's suggestion in the *Chanson*, but his assertion at the council does expose his own flaws and struggles (he is consistently rash and impulsive), in addition to serving as a representation of his concept of valor and honor. Here, we have a prime example of the way that even the less religious *Chanson* juxtaposes an ideal representation of Roland with a more human, flawed version. Even as Charlemagne loves him and values him, addressing him as “bel sire niés” (784), consistently referring to him both as a good knight and as his nephew, the text explicitly reveals, in both narrative and dialogue, that Roland is not perfect.

Indeed, it can be somewhat easy, in the wide fame of the *Chanson* and its title character, to forget just how humanly flawed Roland himself is. Perhaps it was the very humanity of Roland as hero that attracted such attention and fame to the piece in the nineteenth century (DiVanna) but I suggest that he is too often seen as merely a foil to Charlemagne, who can be seen as the idealized lord of knights; if we too simply conceive of the fall of Roland and the triumph of Charlemagne as examples of the failure of the flawed crusader knight as opposed to the success of his perfect master, we run the risk of both underestimating and undervaluing a truth strongly suggested by the *Chanson*: Despite the social and political advantages of promoting an idealized image of the crusader, these characters are more complex than these previous readings allow. The wars in these texts are perpetuated, not merely by the idealized conceptualization of popes and

kings, but also by the lust for power, anger, and even impulsiveness of individual knights. We also wrongly assume that Charlemagne is represented as the perfect contrast and perfect lord to Roland, and that it is for this reason that he wins the battle, where Roland fails. While it is indeed, true, that these texts position Charlemagne's battle against the Saracens as the ultimate battle between God and Satan, as represented by their representatives on earth, according to the texts' theologies, it would be both false and irresponsible to fail to recognize the human emotions and fallibility of Charlemagne as represented in both texts, even as he is shown to be God's vassal on earth. It is this juxtaposition between ideal and human reality, that can be the overlooked gem of the Roland texts, even as Konrad attempts to idealize the figures of Roland and Charlemagne, thus providing an ideological religious backbone to defend the ongoing crusades. Roland's flaws are glaringly apparent in the *Chanson*, yet practically invisible in the *Rolandslied* at the Battle of Roncevaux. The *Chanson*, too, more consistently represents Roland as angry (*Chanson* 777) rash, foolish (*Chanson* 1053), and utterly obsessed with his own reputation (*Chanson* 1054).

These flaws do, of course, lead to his death and the fall of the rear guard at Roncevaux in the *Chanson*, and in turn, this fall sets up the grand finale, in which Charlemagne, with all the power as high emperor, returns to claim victory on the battlefield. But I insist that it is absolutely crucial that we remember that despite the tragedy of Roland's fall, it would be folly to simply dismiss his flaws as plot elements that are necessary to instigate a failure in battle for dramatic effect. No, indeed – Roland's flaws in the *Chanson* subtly reveal the individuality that fueled the Crusades, subverting the simplicity of the feudalistic ideology presented in the texts. While it may

appear that the events within the poems are fueled solely by adherence to a strict feudal code and staunch belief in the necessity of wiping out pagans, the reality is that the actions are fueled most fervently by raw emotion and individual intentions; small chinks and quirks in personality not only change the outcome of these wars but also fundamentally drive them to their ultimate climax.

First, let us first consider the individual character traits of Roland as represented within the *Chanson*. As previously discussed, he is first described as stubborn, as he staunchly opposes the Saracens' first offer from the get-go (194), but Ganelon immediately denounces him, calling him both "bricon" and "fol" (220, 229), introducing the motif and question of what it means to be "foolish" throughout the text, as Roland will go on to assert that he will not blow the Oliphant, for he does not wish to be a "fool" (1053). And yet, despite all this, the text defines him as a true knight, saying he speaks as a true "chevalier" (753) when he is nominated by his traitorous step-father Ganelon to lead the rearguard, thus presenting him as an ideal. The interpretation of Roland as a tragic hero in the *Chanson* and the role these flaws play in setting him up for his demise is so well known it is almost cliché (Patterson), and while this formulation is important, I suggest, that we move beyond it and ask not what role these flaws play in foreshadowing and setting up Roland's death, but rather, what these flaws, along with similar characteristics in other figures in the text tell us about crusader knights in the Roland legend.

With this in mind, it becomes especially curious that both of the Roland texts this paper considers idealize Roland. And yet, there is an enormous difference in the way these texts represent the title character and his behavior in the Battle of Roncevaux.

Indeed, the flaws of the Roland of the *Chanson* seem almost glaringly obvious, as his stubborn insistence on glory and honor, as well as his overinflated belief in his own strength lead him to blow the Oliphant too late to save not only himself, but also his guard.

In contrast, it is especially interesting to examine Konrad's highly idealized representation of Roland as knight. In large measure, this adaptation erases Roland's flaws, idealizing him, even in a narrative in which he falls (Buschinger 112). The enormity of the difference in the representation of Roland as crusader knight in the *Chanson* and the *Rolandslied* provides a crucially interesting comment on crusaders and contemporary attempts to understand and justify their fight. On the one hand, the *Chanson* represents a Roland who is simultaneously perfect and imperfect, a good knight, but a human one, who fails through his own shortcomings.

This text seems, in this way, at least subconsciously aware of a juxtaposition between attempts to idealize and simplify the crusading act with the real complexity of human emotion: The crucial role which Roland's own desire for glory and selfish, hubristic belief in his own invincibility play in both his individual acts within the battle and its overall outcome as the result of his refusal to blow the Oliphant. Konrad's adaptation, on the other hand, idealizes and theologizes Roland's behavior at the Battle of Roncevaux to an almost repetitive extent, advertising the call and mission of the crusaders, as well as their goodness, showing Roland and his fellow crusaders as knights who fight for right. He represents them as martyrs for Christ, as Roland and Olivier agree that "sovem got wil heluen, der mac lichte geuechten" (3858-3859). They willingly, even joyfully accepting their fate as martyrs. In this manner, Konrad seems less concerned

with the reality of the crusade and more obsessed with defending its cause, creating a sacral context for the world of war, that in echo of Urban's speech, attempts to proclaim, with its own Oliphant, as it were, what God wants from his followers namely unquestioning fealty, even unto death. In this context, Konrad takes a text that already presented the crusade, but in a more complicated light, and attempts to turn into a thoroughly theological text, that like an account of a biblical war, argues that God will protect whom he will protect, but that whosoever will sacrifice himself for God's cause will be rewarded on high and eternally. In this way, the ideal Roland is an interesting invention of Konrad's adaptation, as the author takes considerable steps to reimagine the hero and remove his flaws, making him the proverbial poster-child of martyrdom, assuaging the fears of potential recruits as a martyred hero is represented as surely destined for heaven.

This idealization is apparent, not only in a close reading of passages in which Roland is a key player, but also in the adjectives Konrad uses to describe him, in contrast to the descriptions in the *Chanson*. One consistent trend in Konrad's word choice directly contrasts the consistent set up in the *Chanson*. Whereas Olivier is described as "proz" and "gentilz" (177) in the *Chanson* in juxtaposition to the more combatant and stubborn Roland, who Olivier himself describes as having a bad temper (265), the roles are altered in Konrad's adaptation, as Roland is referred to mainly as "der helt" (109) and Olivier is described as "wigant" (110). As the French more consistently refers to Olivier as wise, and rarely too impetuous or angry, the German idealizes Roland, downplaying his angry temperament, while introducing a new, somewhat combative element to Olivier's character and this switch in the lexical code of the text reflects a crucial shift in the

narrative of Konrad's *Rolandslied* as well (see also Buschinger 102). While both Roland and Olivier are good knights in the *Chanson*, their characterizations as temperamental and wise, respectively, play a crucial role in their decisions on the battlefield.

In the *Chanson*, the contrast between Olivier's wisdom and Roland's impulsiveness feeds arguably the most famous moment of the epic, in which Olivier repetitively tells Roland to blow his Oliphant for help and Roland repeatedly refuses. The question of the Oliphant and the debate that surrounds it during the battle is the apex of the drama in the first act in the *Chanson*, as Roland's refusal to blow the Oliphant proves fatal for not only Olivier and Roland, but also the entirety of the 20,000 men that accompany them in the rear guard. This, fascinatingly, is the moment where Konrad chose to omit detail from the *Chanson* in addition to adding his own inventions (Buschinger 115). In the *Chanson*, Charlemagne offers an enormous quantity of reinforcements to Roland out of concern for his safety in the dangerous job of leading the rearguard, assuring him that it will "be his salvation " (786). In the pattern of true tragedy, although the actual betrayal and course of events sure to transpire is not directly known to Charlemagne and his men, there is a definite sense of foreboding in the return to France, which is felt in Charlemagne's premonition to offer Roland an entire half of the army. In typically impulsive fashion, however, Roland refuses to accept the guard, stating, "Jo n'en ferai nient, deux me cunfunde, se la gest en desment" (787-789). Indeed, the true tragedy of Roland in the *Chanson* is that through the classic flaw of hubris, he believes himself capable of surviving whatever may come in the battle through his own strength. He even believes that his army will have nothing to fear so long as he is living (791). This, however, proves to be tragically false, and it is his very hubris that prevents

him from sounding his horn and calling Charlemagne's army back to save the rearguard, despite Olivier's repeated requests that he do so (1051, 1059, 1070), and the rearguard ultimately perishes en masse because Roland "would not deign" to sound his Oliphant (1171).

This brief summary of the cause of the tragedy of Roncevaux in the *Chanson* will well seem banal to those familiar with the Roland story, particularly as it is these very moments that have provoked multiple analyses, and it is this very Oliphant for which the journal specializing in Roland studies, *Olifant*, takes its name.

But this highly basic analysis of the tragedy of the Oliphant bears repeating here, precisely because Konrad chooses to eliminate it. Much as this moment has captured the imagination of modern scholars, Konrad did not deign to include it in his adaptation of the story, as the rear guard in the *Rolandslied* does fall, and falls fantastically, just as in the *Chanson*, though not through any hubris or imagined invulnerability on the part of Roland. No indeed, as Buschinger notes, Karl does not extend the same generous offer of reinforcements to Roland in the *Rolandslied* that he does in the *Chanson*. By eliminating the offer of extra men, Konrad also eliminates Roland's opportunity to save his men by easily accepting Karl's wise offer, and similarly eliminates any blame he might receive for refusing the extension of help for fear of knightly shame. But Konrad's adaptations do not end here.

Instead, Konrad reframes the struggle over the Oliphant. Although Olivier does encourage Roland to blow his horn, asking, "owi geselle Rolant, wan blasetu noch din horn?" (3864-3865), Roland is not belligerent in refusing him, nor does he trust in his own strength to win the battle. Indeed, it seems that Roland does not deem it right to

blow the horn, because he believes he is being prepared for martyrdom. His mindset is the result of two factors, both of which were introduced to the text by Konrad – firstly, the theology of martyrdom espoused by Karl from the very beginning of the text, in which the highest honor is not bravery or valor, as in the knightly world of the *Chanson*, but rather, the chance to earn a crown in the heavenly choir of martyrs. This stands in stark juxtaposition to the role martyrdom plays in the *Chanson*, where the realm of martyrs exists chiefly in the form of reliquary encased in weapons, such as Roland's sword (Vance 75). Roland has regarded the opportunity to be a martyr with relish ever since his debut in the text in the *Rolandslied*, but there is yet another factor at stake. The army participates in Mass shortly before heading into battle in the *Rolandslied* (3398), and receives communion, thus preparing their souls to meet God. Konrad's treatment of this aspect of the text emphasizes their willing preparation for martyrdom.

They enter battle, not only believing that they are about to do God's will, but also that they are in a state of grace and will be accepted as willing and worthy martyrs, should they die in battle. Roland has been not only ideologically prepared, along with his army, for martyrdom, but he has also been practically prepared. Having only just received the host, he is in a state of grace, and is thus prepared for martyrdom. These changes utterly alter the nature of the battle and Roland's death in the *Rolandslied*.

Instead of serving as a prideful counterpart to other characters in the epic, Roland acts as the most faithful of all the knights in the host, having complete faith that whatever happens on the battlefield, all will be well, as “di heiden sint uor gote uirtailiet” (3879, trusting that God will judge them, as they are on the side of the Lord. Indeed, there even seems to be some level of martyr's joy in Roland's proclamation of this solution: He

speaks of death in the battle as being baptized again in blood (3880), thus positing that just as one can be washed clean in baptism when one comes to Christ initially and is baptized with water, the martyr can receive remission once again when he is baptized through his own life's blood in death, becoming a martyr for God (3881). Together, these statements form his clear conceptualization that his sacrifice will indeed be greeted with the hundredfold reward promised him by his emperor Charlemagne and by the Lord Christ, as He manifested to His apostles.

In the final scenes of Roland's life within the epic, Konrad erases all trace of the knightly attributes that were his downfall in the *Chanson* – he suffers no form of hubris, to cause his downfall. And yet, Konrad still does not deign to save Roland's life. Instead, he chooses to save his *soul*, offering him as a willing martyr, and using his choice to die as martyr to enact a spiritual framework in which crusaders receive manifold heavenly blessings for death in God's service. Crucially, the choice is given to Roland – he chooses to fight in this battle and be martyred from the very opening lines in the text and refuses to blow the Oliphant because he believes himself to be in God's hands (3870), though he may be delivered through death. Even in Konrad's text, the loss of the rear guard is great. But it is important to note that Konrad repositions this loss – though the entire guard dies, they are also saved within the framework he has created for the tale. Unlike Christians in the hundreds of years preceding them, they have had the opportunity to be the masters of their own salvation, and Roland does so, sacrificing himself for Christendom.

It is crucial to note here that Konrad seems to have bought into the theological conception of the crusade in a manner that the original author of the *Chanson* did not,

despite the idealistic aspects of the text in the original Old French. Whereas the original French definitely offers an idealized and didactic representation of the fight with the Saracens, Konrad's text takes considerably more steps to solidify the religious justification for the war, presenting Roland as not only thoroughly convinced that he can gain salvation through his worthy participation in this crusade but also as free of any motivation save only his desire for martyrdom, a reimagination that stands in stark contrast to the original impulsive Roland. This seems to be an attempt at recasting chivalry: While it is still violent and filled with ideals of glory and honor, all of these conceptualizations are more explicitly tied to God and His mission in the Konrad, in an attempt to propagandize and advertise what God wants from his followers.

This idealization and reimagination in Konrad's text doubtless serves to create a worldview in religious support of the crusade. Konrad performs drastic rewrites in the first act of the *Rolandslied* in order to advocate and celebrate martyrdom. He reimagines the question of blowing the Oliphant, so that instead of serving as a classic tragedy, the deaths of the warriors at Roncevaux can be simply praised as martyrdoms, because of their faith in God, even though their sacrifice still prompts the vengeful action of Karl in the final act, as the final chapter will consider. His religious casting of the tragedy of Roland's death celebrates dying for God, and in many ways, his adaptation serves his own call to the crusade in echo of Urban II's speech, given almost one hundred years prior.

If anything, in fact, Konrad represents the warriors at Roncevaux as even more doomed to die. He does not save them, he merely erases the easy way out for the guard and seems to authoritatively confirm Roland's decision not to blow the Oliphant,

implying that just as it is God's will that the rearguard fight the heathen enemy, so it is His will that they die for him and join the martyr's choir in heaven. By repositioning the tragic finale of the first act of the legend, as it were, Konrad creates his own idealistic affirmation of the crusade. And while the original *Chanson* presents the battle as one between right and wrong, Christian and pagan, France and other, Konrad's version even further develops the ideology of the text, using religious glorification and theological reasoning to justify and celebrate the task of the crusade, providing a politically sound framework that would stand in support of the crusade movement as Germany began following suit, heading east as their French counterparts had begun doing almost a century before.

Even as Konrad attempts to justify and defend the crusade by presenting this carefully crafted worldview, however, I suggest that the humanity within the text is still present, even as he tried to erase it in order to create an ideal Christian knight to serve as the ideal for his crusading audience in his carefully constructed representation of Roland. The crack in the veneer can be found, not, in fact, in Roland, who may traditionally be seen as the "weak link" in the epic, as he is unable to conquer the Saracens and must be avenged by Charlemagne. No indeed, the crack is to be found in Charlemagne himself, as the final chapter will prove.

CHAPTER 3

PERFECTION AND PATHOS IN THE FIGURES OF CHARLEMAGNE AND KARL

To this point, this project has analyzed the tension between the idealistic simplification of the crusades within the *Chanson* and the *Rolandslied* and the complexity of humanity that underscores this ideological model, subversively suggesting, through small hints, the complexity of war and the incomprehensible difficulty of compacting the Crusades into a simple framework.

This tension exists in both the representation of the 12 peers, as well as in that of Roland himself. Both exhibit strong ideological frameworks, which are subverted by humanity. The tense relationship between the idealization of such characters and their humanity in the text presents a more complicated picture, even within the weave of a succinct ideological set of values. But this tension does not stop here, and in fact, is most prominent in the representation of Charlemagne in the *Chanson* and Karl in the *Rolandslied*. In both texts, he is figured as Holy Roman Emperor and representative of God on earth (Niles 123), but while this is somewhat more implicit rather than explicit in the *Chanson*, Konrad establishes Karl's theological power from the very beginning of his text.

It particularly fitting to conclude this examination of the tension between idealism and humanity in these texts by considering the representation of Charlemagne and Karl, not only because they play vital roles in the texts, but also because moving from the examination of vassal to liege lord reflects the feudal structure within the texts, and the structure of the original *Roland* is closely tied to meaning (Brault “Structure et Sens” 4). Indeed, the structure of both texts mirrors the structure of medieval feudalism, beginning with the crusading efforts of the peerage, represented by the 12 peers within the text, then zooming in more explicitly on the efforts of Roland, the most valued and honored of the knights at the Battle of Roncevaux and nephew to Charlemagne, before finally proceeding to the ultimate battle between kings and gods as Charlemagne combats the Saracen army led by the Caliph Baligant (or Paligan, as he is referred to in the German). In this manner, even the structure of these texts demonstrates the implications of the framework they use, demonstrating the social hierarchy within the religious ideological conceptualization of crusading and the rewards that accompany it. Especially in Konrad’s text, the peers receive honor for their martyrdom at Roncevaux, and an implied salvation, while Roland’s death brings a more dramatic earthquake and episode of darkness, paralleling (6927-6945) the language in Revelations recounting the end of the world (Revelation 6:12), but only Charlemagne and Karl, through God, have the power to conquer the mighty heathen. The basis for this scene may be found in the original Old French, but Konrad makes the parallel more explicit – both seem to parallel Christ’s death in Matthew’s account (Nelting 206), further increasing the link between Christ and his crusaders.

Beyond this structural argument for the importance of the representation of

Charlemagne and Karl within the ideological framework of these texts, it is also vitally important to acknowledge that Konrad considers Karl the chief exemplar, as “von Karl und seinem Leben im Dienste der Heidenbekehrung soll [des Autors] Werk ein Beispiel geben” (Richter 81). Indeed, as Richter points out, Konrad himself declares the project of his adaptation to be the explanation of the great example of Karl, describing his tale as one that will describe “eineme turlichem man, wie er daz gotes riche gewan” (9-10). Indeed, taking Konrad at his word, we can indeed assume that the entire point of Konrad’s text is to convince us of the goodness of Karl and recount how he earned his place in God’s heaven; Konrad explicitly addresses the audience in the opening paragraphs of his work in order to convince them that they must pay heed to this good exemplar. As an ideological text, it fundamentally places Karl on a pedestal for not only adoration but also emulation, prescribing a pattern after which God would have us behave in order not only succeed in the crusades, but also succeed on Earth and progress to heaven.

While it is tempting to begin our analysis of the representations of Charlemagne and Karl in the texts by plunging into his grand success on the battlefield, an episode that clearly establishes his authority and power as God’s, we must first back up, to the beginning of the texts, to establish the ways in which the authors establish authority in these figures from the beginning of the text. Indeed, the establishment of authority within these texts poses an interesting question, as the authors align themselves with Charlemagne and his court to some extent, thus aligning their power to set down the narrative with his power, which, they posit, comes from God. Konrad, in particular, accomplishes this with his supplication to God at the beginning of the work, as we will

see in a moment.

It is crucial to first note, that while Konrad's adaptation of the *Chanson* needed to take considerable liberties with description and even narrative in order to render Roland into a more ideal Christian knight, the existing descriptions and narrative actions of Charlemagne in the Oxford edition of the *Chanson* already depict him as not only highly religious, but also aligned with God, as Western Europe shared the concept of a theocratic kingship. Still, as noted in the first chapter, there is a level of obsession with his possessions and military success in the *Chanson*, an emphasis on earthly power, which Konrad replaces with even more religious fervor and the creation of a full-blown theological allegory. While Konrad does praise the Kaiser's acquisitions, he does so within a religious framework, specifying both that the lands he conquered were heathen and that this expansion enlarged the realm of Christianity. If we choose to see the *Rolandslied* as a courtly hagiography, (and even if we do not), the early allusion in the text to the many "heidinske lant" (14-15) that Karl has conquered seems to address the existing myths of his campaigning in the Holy Land, as also briefly noted in Chapter 1.

Regarding the successful enlargement of the realm of Christianity, then, it is to be supposed that whether or not Karl imposed Christianity as a mandate in these newly acquired territories, his acquisitions are to be seen not merely as political gains or actions to enlarge the treasury, but rather as efforts to build up the Kingdom of God on Earth. But most importantly, Konrad sets up all of the action in the text with three tactics. First, he establishes Karl as a saint, clearly outlining Karl's elevated position in the heavens in the opening lines of the text, explicitly stating that a "nu hat in got gehalten in sineme riche" (28-29) and that he achieved eternal life (30). Second, he invents a direct calling from an

angel of God, which stylistically and allegorically aligns him with biblical prophets, and finally, he further allegorically connects Karl with the Biblical prophet-kings and Christ in his description of Karl's court upon the arrival of the Saracen emissaries.

Before proceeding into an analysis of the angel's call at the beginning of the text, it must first be acknowledged that angels appear in both texts (Terry 155). That said, they seem to proliferate with even greater frequency in the *Rolandslied*. While Konrad does mention the "heathen lands" that Karl has previously conquered, he does not present him at the beginning of the narrative as mid-campaign in the same manner as the *Chanson*, and invents a direct heavenly order that Karl head out on this attempt to Christianize the land. In this manner, Konrad sets the stage in a much more reverent tone than is exhibited in the *Chanson*, which includes only passing mentions at conversion by the sword and the chance of "saving" pagans (40, 101). Indeed, as various points in this paper suggest, perhaps the largest difference in the *Rolandslied* is its significantly more religious tone regarding the war effort, particularly in the introduction, as both texts ultimately position the battle between Karl and Paligan as one between not just rulers, but also the deities they worship.

Much as Konrad inserted a new introduction to Roland in order to figure him as a religious knight, instead of merely an impulsive and hotheaded nephew, he also adds an entirely invented prelude to the beginning of the action in the *Chanson*, in which Karl seeks an order from God and calls his men to a crusade in explicit terms. Their answer to this crusade has already been addressed; the beginning of this chapter will more explicitly frame the call they answered.

This addition, too, is preceded by the author's own extradiegetic supplication to

God, which makes up the very first lines of the text, as Konrad asks to be filled with the power of the Holy Ghost so that he may adequately relate the true story of how the noble Kaiser Karl achieved a place in heaven (5-11). This prayer, offered up by the author, takes a particularly interesting role as one offered by an adapter, in suggesting that he needs divine help, or divine intervention, to correctly tell a tale that has already been told, subtly implying that previous recounts of the tale have been lacking in at least one respect – their success in describing the actions and worthiness of Karl as God’s representative on Earth and the vital nature of the crusade. Beyond this interpretation of Konrad’s motives as described in the opening lines of the work, the supplication also serves to lend a religious tone to the text that is largely nonexistent in the beginning of the *Chanson*, directly paralleling the prayer Charlemagne is about to offer and many more supplications and prayers to come in the following scenes. Of course, it is also a form of rhetorical conceit common in medieval texts.

The Kaiser himself prays when all his men are sleeping (49), begging for a chance to save the heathen from their evil ways (44-45). He receives his answer in the form of a visit from an angel, like those experienced by Old Testament prophets and Mary and Joseph shortly before Christ’s birth – in short, he receives his directive through the same messenger that God uses to speak to his most trusted servants before the most monumental moments in Christianity. He is thus set apart from the other earthly men, as he receives this holy directive, and is rendered akin to great prophets and saints. This, of course, is not the only instance in which Karl is symbolically associated with other giants of the holy realm in the Bible, and there is even textual evidence to suggest that the geographical relations between mountain and valley can help us read religious

significance into his figure (Noyer-Weidner 14). Karl is directly connected to Christ, King David, and King Solomon in the *Rolandslied* (Richter 83). Through this allegorical association, his successes are not merely the effectual successes of a powerful ruler, but the successes of God. His power is not *like* God's power; his power *is* God's power, as we find in this early description of his prowess.

As the Saracen emissaries enter Karl's camp, Konrad takes a few minutes to further establish Karl's role within the allegory, stating that there hasn't been such splendor in a camp since the days of King Solomon (671). Karl's eyes flash with the power of the morning star (687), and this description bears striking similarity to Christ's words as recounted in Revelations 22 by the John the Evangelist: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Revelations 22:16). Just as Christ established his own authority, both through his prophesied lineage through King David and Solomon, but also through his status as the morning star, the bright shining glory of the heavens, so too Konrad describes Karl, whose camp glitters with the allegorical glory of God. Like Christ, even *as* Christ, he comes to save the people from their sins, prepared to sacrifice, even his own life. As similar descriptions are also used throughout the Old Testament in description of high priests, such lexical coding is also a means of establishing Karl as priest in addition to his calling as a holy king (Richter 88).

Indeed, Konrad takes great care to establish Karl's allegorical authority from the outset, explicitly establishing a theological framework in the passages he added to the original. Whereas the *Chanson* includes a fight against the pagan in an already-active war, the German *Rolandslied* begins with a specific call to the Crusade. Moreover, the

angel's call to Charlemagne includes direct orders, sending him to a specific location with the injunction, "il in Yspaniam!" (56), specifying that it is God's will that Karl conquer the problem that has tortured him – namely, the sure damnation of heathendom – and that he conquer this problem in reference to a specific people in a specific land. This positioning of peoples, placing Karl's army against the Spanish heathen, along with a specific call from God, parallels God's processing of "peoples" in the Old Testament, in which Israelites ("my people" are juxtaposed with gentiles as in Genesis). But the Biblical parallels in the establishment of Charlemagne's crusade do not end here; indeed even in this section, Karl is again tied to Christ. He is the one who worries for the salvation of mankind, who seeks to save them from their heathen ways. Indeed, Karl is shown living closest to the way Christ lived (Richter 93) through these actions, further establishing the allegorical parallel.

When Karl arises from his prayer to call his 12 peers to him, in a method paralleling Christ's calling of the 12 apostles, he bids them, "swer durch got arbeit, sin lon wirt ime gereitet" (95-96), echoing the same type of heavenly reward promised in Christ's promise to his disciples that "If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 15: 24-25). The invocation of this oft-cited scripture is essential in this instance for several reasons: First, it clearly establishes the line between this war and the actual crusades and crusader vows, which constituted "taking up the cross" as part of the promises and rituals associated with departing on a crusade (Asbridge). Secondly, Konrad uses it to make a deliberate connection for the audience between Christ and Karl, delineating him, like Christ, as

earthly representative of the Lord. Indeed, the biblical parallels become increasingly significant in the text, even in this scene. The Kaiser directly cites a promise Christ issues to his disciples in both Luke and Matthew to convince them to follow him,

Swër wíp oder kint lát
 Hús oder eigen,
 Daz wil ich ui bescaiden
 Wi in got lonen wil:
 Er git ime zehenzec stunt sam uil,
 Dar zu sin himilriche (184-189)

reproducing Matthew 19:29 in the vernacular. This citation could be perceived as a simple quotation, used to persuade Karl's men, but in reality, the citation of this verse is crucial, like the previously mentioned citation, to two central issues in the Christianization of the epic in Konrad's version. First, like the above citation, it establishes the Kaiser as representative of Christ, and secondly, it grants him power to offer these promises to his men. While quoting Christ obviously serves as a way of establishing religious authority and clout in Christian circles, Karl's citation goes one step further, precisely because he *adopts* Christ's words instead of admitting to citing them, further establishing the allegory. Karl does not simply speak *for* Christ: He speaks *as* Christ.

At first glance, such a distinction could seem minute or inconsequential, but in fact, it is neither. Were Karl to speak *of* Christ in calling his men to the crusade in Spain, recalling the promises he made to disciples, he would be acting as a good preacher, much like the historical preachers of the early crusades who prompted the devout to fight for Christ (Asbridge 41), an element of crusade history that can sometimes falsely lead us to assume that all crusaders were ardent Christians in search of glory for their God and salvation for their souls. But in this scene, Karl does something more complicated than

merely referring to Christ to back him up: He steps *into* Christ's place in this scene, authoritatively promising the men their heavenly reward as if it were his to grant, as if he shared the same connection with God the Father as Jesus Christ did in offering the promise to the disciples He called to serve alongside Him.

The audience is doubtless expected to pick up on the reference, but Karl's claiming of the promise as his own is nonetheless crucial to a correct reading of this passage, in which Konrad deliberately positions Karl as emissary and vassal of God – ultimately, as Christ. This war is called of God. It is a crusade with the power to grant salvation, and it is led by Christ himself, allegorically represented as Karl.

There is a theologically problematic element in this section of the text, as Karl promises his men salvation for their participation and possible martyrdom in his crusade, a theological promise which the church and even its ecclesiastical leaders, had no authoritative power to grant. Ecclesiastical leaders of the crusades supposed that crusaders who confessed their sins and participated in the crusades could, in fact, be transposed to a state of grace, from which God could choose to save them from the fiery depths of hell, but no actual promise of absolution of sins existed during this period of the crusades (Asbridge 40), despite the many preachers who may have promised it to crowds that may have been eager for forgiveness. (The church councils did later adapt this part of the doctrine, authorizing such a remission of sins, but not until after this period and the production of this text.)

This theological overstepping is obviously problematic, as church teachings at the time only qualified these armed pilgrims for a welcome into a state of grace as the result of their hard efforts. But despite its theological stickiness, this promise was not

without precedent. Indeed, Urban II himself laid the groundwork for this promised remission of sins in his speech at the Council of Clermont, in which Fulcher of Chartres quotes him as saying, “Remission of sins will be granted for those going thither, if they end a shackled life either on land or in crossing the sea, or in struggling against the heathen. I, being vested with that gift from God, grant this to those who go” (Peters 53), thus justifying the preaching that remission of sins could be gained through crusading, despite the lack of actual theological grounding behind his claim.

It is not the theological difficulty here, however, that is most interesting, but the manner in which Konrad bypasses it, in order to establish Karl’s authority. Urban himself had overstepped his own power in making this proclamation, but here, Konrad completely bypasses the pope as he aligns Karl with Christ via allegory. Here, Karl needs no intermediary to make the offer of salvation, which only God could offer, and therefore, Konrad successfully establishes a framework in which Karl can allegorically function as Christ.

Konrad does not create this theological allegory out of thin air, but he does drastically magnify it. Indeed, while Charlemagne grants some kind of forgiveness to his men in the Oxford edition, physically blessing them, “de sa main destre l’ad asols e seignet” (340), he does not grant them complete absolution, nor does the original creator of the *Chanson* credit him with quite the same level of theological power, and the sheer volume of new additions to the *Rolandslied* which compare Karl to David and Christ are staggering. Here, Konrad takes the already existing concept of the Holy Roman Emperor as “vicar of Christ” and takes it to a whole new level.

Indeed, there is no subversive moment in which he must bow to a lower figure

who is, nevertheless, his ecclesiastical superior (as Roland turns to his fellow peer, Bishop Turpin, to grant absolution to the rearguard before they head into battle). Despite the fact that a historical Holy Roman Emperor would have deferred to a pope, Charlemagne and Karl need defer to no one but God. Karl, in particular, is simply capable of acting for God, as if his own desires are indeed aligned with God's. In both texts, Charlemagne and Karl are able, through the bizarre simplicity of theological idealization, to grant forgiveness and invoke God's power, not merely through his supplication, but also through some sort of assumed theological power, a power that both authors unquestioningly build on.

Aside from the representation of Charlemagne as simply a religious leader, associated with God, it is impossible to conclusively determine whether the authors represent Charlemagne's ecclesiastical power so unquestioningly because they are consciously attempting to establish an ideological and theological framework in which crusader kings can be seen as filled with the power of Christ, like extremely powerful priests, or whether they simply assume this framework as part of their existence. But regarding the historical reality in which crusader kings traveled with and relied upon priests, Charlemagne and Karl's ability to carry theologizing and blessings alone (with the exception of the burials, which seem to be carried out with the assistance of priests), suggests the conscious development of an ideological and theological framework on the part of not just the highly religious Konrad, but also on the part of the anonymous author of the original *Chanson*.

At this point, it is worth bearing in mind the vernacular aspect of both texts. Even though they deal, to varying degrees, with highly religious material, they are not

produced in Latin. As cleric, Konrad would, of course, have been widely familiar with Latin, and he briefly explains that in translating the *Chanson*, he first rendered it in Latin before transforming it into the vernacular, an interesting note that may perhaps reiterate the extent to which he sees his project as a hagiographical one, primarily executed to endow Karl with sainthood (9082). Who knows, whether or not the original singer of the *Chanson* would have had the same access to Latin religious texts? Thus, even bearing in mind the religious stories they tell, it crucial to note that as vernacular texts, the *Chanson* and the *Rolandslied* function on a different theological level than Latin texts. They tend to simplify theology, rendering it absolute. This may well account for the theological patterns within the tale, particularly the simple right vs. wrong framework they represent; but then again, this framework also reflects Augustinian conceptualizations of right and wrong, as well as the general Christian understanding of these same concepts.

This vernacular simplicity allows for such great possession of power by the leader of the crusade, providing a type of *carte blanche* that allows even the very religious Konrad to establish an allegory directly aligning Karl with Christ. On a level of ideology, this allegory, as described above, would simply serve to quell any doubts about the divine nature of the crusade.

Perhaps it is for this reason that both texts so explicitly support Charlemagne's religious authority, and that Konrad so drastically reworks it to align Karl with Christ. But if we are looking at the questions of representation and idealization within the ideological narrative, as well as the tension between these ideals and subversive characterizations that bring a simplistic rendering of the crusades into question, Charlemagne and Karl must stand at the crux of that discussion.

Though he clearly shares a close relationship with God in both texts, and enjoys visits and advice from angels, cheering on his crusade, as it were, he is not without humanity. Both the original *Chanson* and Konrad's adaptation show him as possessing more human emotion than perhaps any character in the text. While Karl willingly fights God's crusade and even willingly seeks this crusade by petitioning an angel at the opening of the text, he suffers emotional distress and exhibits the tendency to default to and be ruled by his emotions on several instances in the text. These emotive responses stand slightly at odds with the presentation of Charlemagne as the simple conduit of God's justice and power as crusader king. These tensions reveal that even in the idealized form of Charlemagne, human love, hate, and anger can be seen as principle driving forces within even the most idealized crusade context. This presents a complex situation, as such a suffering depiction plays well with Konrad's goal of establishing Karl as a saint, as no one can achieve sainthood without suffering. On the other hand, however, Karl does seem to exhibit a humanity, perhaps surviving from the original *Chanson*, which could be said to contradict his allegorical deification throughout the text.

For the purposes of this argument and following the establishment of Charlemagne and Karl as religious figures in the beginning of the texts, this chapter will next further examine the ways in which Charlemagne and Karl can be seen as carrying out God's mission in the crusade and then examine the ways in which their personal likes and dislikes shape the crusade itself, as well as how their grief and desire for revenge serve as the principle motivation for the ultimate battle with Baligant/Paligan. Finally, I will compare how far their power extends as represented in the texts' representations of the trial of Ganelon.

In the *Rolandslied*, it is worth simply accepting that Karl's power is absolute; he is meant to be perfectly powerful and completely aligned with God – it is through him that all justification for this holy war flows. It is also through him that all success comes. This is true in the *Chanson* as well. Indeed, even simply on a level of structure, both Charlemagne and Karl are the ones to finally end the battle against the pagan.

To fully establish the miracle of both Charlemagne and Karl's success of on the battlefield, we must remember, not only that Roland and the 12 peers die when the rearguard is attacked at Roncevaux Pass, but all the men with them die as well. Indeed, the men fall in such large numbers that they disappear by the thousands in both texts, and both versions also explicitly recount the deaths of the 12 peers. Roland and the 12 peers may be successful *martyrs*, within the contexts of both Roland legends, and particularly within Konrad's martyrdom-obsessed version, but their only success was in killing many of the men who attacked them, as they do not, ultimately emerge victorious.

In the *Chanson*, Charlemagne approaches the battlefield, then jumps off his horse to prostrate himself on the ground, “sur l’erbe verte se est culchet adenz” (3087) in the most penitent form of prayer. In the *Rolandslied*, he does the same, lying down on the ground with his arms outstretched to form the cross. They supplicate their Lord for protection in a remarkably similar manner, penitently approaching the battle. Beyond simply demonstrating sincerity, any prayer in this position clearly would have signaled several things to a medieval audience; in addition to the obvious prostration and submission to God involved in this position, it also invokes the image of the cross, as one lies straight on the ground, with arms outstretched to form the cross. In this way, Charlemagne and Karl are allegorically enacting the crucifixion, tying themselves

directly to Christ by entering a position that recalls His greatest suffering. In addition to this, there is also Biblical significance, Joshua, too, fell flat on his face in supplication before the battle of Jericho (Joshua 7:6), establishing the precedent that when one of God's earthly leaders is in dire need of His aid, that servant will pray in this manner. The fact that this detail exists in both texts shows not only that Konrad did perform a close translation of the text in some cases, but also that Charlemagne does seem as religious as Karl in some moments in the texts. There is a difference, however, in their prayers: Both versions of the supplication refer to God as He who saved Jonah, as well as the King of Nineveh (3101-3103, 7903-7929), but Charlemagne's version mentions David as well, whereas Karl does not, as he is equated with the new David within the text, further outlying the extent to which Konrad's text operates on allegory, equating Karl with David and Christ.

Not all the differences in Karl's prayer are omissions, however. Indeed, Karl supplicates himself for much longer, and includes the descriptions of other holy persons, such as Saint Peter, who walked on water. These prayers reiterate the alignment of Charlemagne with Christ, reminding the audience of the allegory in preparation for the battlefield, producing a reading of the battle that will parallel with the ultimate battle of the apocalypse.

As a result of this supplication in the *Chanson*, Charlemagne receives direct succor from God, as when he hears "la seinte voiz de l'angle" (3612), explicitly receiving a visit from the Angel Gabriel himself. Indeed, as much as Charlemagne does not fear death before entering the combat, he is not a perfect warrior himself and at the crucial point of battle, the Emir strikes him so powerfully that his bone is utterly exposed (3607)

and it is explicitly clear that he would have fallen, but for one thing: “Deus ne volt qu’il seit mort ne vencut” (3610). In the theology of both texts, then, everything comes down to a question of God’s will, and God will not allow Charlemagne to fall.

At this moment, he receives the crucial visit from the Angel Gabriel, who asks him one simple question: “Reis mages, que fais tu?” (3610), saving the king from the brink of death by simply asking this question. For Charlemagne, indeed, this is enough, and the benediction of the angel miraculously fills him with renewed strength (3614), which he then uses to slay Baligant/Paligan, brutally slicing his head in half, right down the center. The victory is, in this sense, utterly complete, and due to God’s hand in the conflict. Charlemagne may have sought a crusade through his prayer, and he may be the one physically fighting on the field, but the visiting angels in both the beginning and conclusion of the text attest that this crusade is God’s crusade, His work, and He will have his will accomplished.

Indeed, it is absolutely crucial to establish the success of Charlemagne in this final battle is not due to his overwhelmingly large army, nor to his heroic strength, but thoroughly to his allegiance to God. This is made explicitly clear through his prayers to God before the battle in both the French and the German, but Konrad makes it even more clear within his allegorical framework. Konrad explicitly frames the battle as one not merely between kings, but explicitly as a battle between Gods. Karl’s battle with Paligan is laced with theologizing in Konrad’s adaptation. He cries:

Min erbe wolt ich gerne besitzin
 Daz mîr uon angenge gegarwet ist,
 Dar mich der heilige Christ
 Mit sinem tiuren blute erkufet hat
 Nu merke du minen rat
 Erchius dir in ze herren

Sone mac dir nicht gewerren (8480-8487).

This section of Konrad's adaptation shows crusading at its ideological height. Even as two kings who command entire armies go head to head in a fight to the death, the issue at hand is not the physical battle, but rather the theological battle. Konrad presents this not as merely a battle between kings for territory and wealth but a battle for the universe – a battle between gods that will designate that one will reign over all the Earth, with power and glory. Even in this moment fraught with physical conflict, the conflict at heart is not the physical, but the spiritual, and Karl boldly declares that all is well with him, for Christ has already paid for the wellbeing of his soul with his precious blood. When Konrad speaks of Karl fighting for God's kingdom on Earth and for his spot in heaven, this is precisely the moment he invokes; this is the ideal moment of crusading, where the knight becomes not merely warrior but also missionary. Interestingly, Karl is not the only missionary on the field. As if Christ is facing the devil, Karl must directly confront Paligan not only with a sword, but also with words. Indeed, Paligan himself has a battle cry in answer to his. He quickly responds:

Min herre Teruagant
Der hiu dir den schilt uon der hant.
Wa ist din herre Crist
Uf den du so dicke gist? (8495-8499).

Here, he asserts that his Lord was the one to throw Karl's shield out of his hands, not the Emir himself. Paligan's assertion not only points out the dualism at play on the battlefield as two kings from entirely different religions face off, but also explicitly reveals that his God is fighting on the battlefield for him, just as Karl insists his Christ can offer defense and protection. In essence, this scene masterfully wraps up the entire ideological assertion of these texts: It suggests that the battle taking place is one to be fought for religious

reasons, on both sides. Thus, while historical accounts suggest that the inhabitants of the east were confused by the initial attacks of the crusaders, not understanding their purpose (Maalouf 3), this text fabricates a context in which both Muslim and Christian are entirely opposed against one another, primarily and extensively because of their different religions.

More than that, however, the crucial issue here is that God is *with* Karl (indeed, *God is Karl*), whereas God *is not* with the pagans. This battle is really one of good and evil – the very eschatological battle itself.

It can be easy, in the context of comparing the *Chanson* and the *Rolandslied*, to imply that such a religious subtext is nonexistent in the *Chanson*, merely because the religious framework in the *Rolandslied* is more extensively belabored and elaborated. But assuming this would, in fact, be false. Condemnations of the “heathen,” “pagan” Muslims exist in as powerful proclamation in the *Chanson* as in the later *Rolandslied*, written by a priest. For example, let us consider Charlemagne’s injunction to his knights in the *Chanson* as he calls them to battle, gearing them up to fight their Muslim foe, not just denouncing, but denigrating their religion:

Barons franceis, vos estes bons vassals,
Tantes batailles avez faites en camps!
Veez païen, felun sunt e cuart,
Tutes lors leis un dener ne lur valt (3335-3339).

This injunction provides a stunning exemplar of the Christianity-only framework as presented in the original text, even as Konrad builds on the motif, lengthening the work continually. There is no room in this framework, for two religions of different, but similar value (ironically similar as the modern scholar knows Christianity and Islam to be, though the tensions left behind by the crusades have by no means been entirely erased).

No, indeed – both kings are entirely convinced that they are correct in their faith and that *their* God will be the one to make a play on the battlefield and alter the course of the struggle. In this sense, the figures of Baligant/Paligan and Charlemagne/Karl are remarkably similar, as indeed, they appear to be in power and strength; we even learn, in a side note, that Baligant appears a “barun” (3171), marking him as a worthy opponent to Charlemagne, as king. The authors of the *Chanson* and the *Rolandslied* draw similar appellations and parallelisms amongst the Christian knights and the Saracen warriors in general, taking care to present the opponent powerful as well (Dobozy “Meaning” 241), primarily to establish the worthiness of the Saracens as foe and the difficulty of the battle the Christian heroes must fight.

In this context, however, as Charlemagne and Baligant face off, the designation of Baligant as both a true knight and a strong warrior is crucial because it effectively puts the emperor and the emir he fights on even footing save one exception: The power of God. In this sense, both Konrad and the author of the *Chanson* take special care to establish the equality of the duel Charlemagne/Karl and Baligant/Paligan will fight in order to put special emphasis on the decisive power and influence of their respective Gods, setting the stage for Christianity to strike and win with unquestionable power. This ultimately serves to underscore the underlying ideological theme of both texts – as Roland put it, that “païen unt tort e chrestïens unt dreit” (1015), and as the Saracens themselves realize, watching their seemingly all-powerful Emir begin to fall at the hands of the Christian Emperor, that “il ad tort e Carlemagnes dreit” (3554). In this manner, the texts create an absolute theological framework and worldview; there is no plurality of correctness, but merely one wrong and one right (Kinoshita 79). You are either with God,

or against Him. This renders the issue of a crusade extremely simple; the texts themselves create not only a clear right, but also only *one* right. In this way, their narratives promote an ideological norm. They present a straightforward religious ideology, conforming with Augustinian conceptualizations of good and evil (Morris 82), in which good is defined as proximity to God and evil is defined by increased distance from God. Konrad increases the stakes here by increasing Karl's proximity to God through allegory.

There are some senses, however, in which these texts' ideological framework is imperfect, no matter how seemingly flawless their presented worldviews seem. Here, the humanity of the emperor plays a crucial role in suggesting the true motivations of crusader kings, as well as crusaders as a whole. Indeed, the emperor's own, very personal attributes, have a fundamental effect on shaping the crusade. Perhaps the most obvious instance of this is that the entire conflict at Roncevaux hinges on the betrayal Ganelon commits, a betrayal that he would have been incapable of committing were it not for Charlemagne's decision in the original *Chanson* sends Ganelon to liaise with Marsile instead of sending any of the members of his peerage who volunteer for the commission. Looking briefly back at that passage, there certainly are reasons for which Charlemagne dismisses the volunteers from his peerage from the responsibility of going to Marsile: The Duke of Naimmes is refused because he is too valuable (248), while Olivier insists Roland is too bad-tempered (255), and indeed, Charlemagne insists that none of the 12 peers shall be selected (262). Turpin too, seems too valuable a risk for the King to send on such a dangerous mission. In stark contrast, when Roland nominates Ganelon and Ganelon complains, Charlemagne himself condemns Ganelon for having a "tendre coer" in complaining of leaving his son behind (317) and orders him to leave at once.

What is to be supposed here, but that Charlemagne's arrangement of the court in this scene is entirely influenced by his own, very human, likes and dislikes? Roland, too, has an ulterior motive in nominating his stepfather for the mission; while he was willing to go himself, he knows it is dangerous, and he is happy to nominate a stepfather he dislikes for a mission that may prove deadly. Simply reading this section of the tale as an a series of proper courtly tactics would rob us of a crucial understanding of the enormous role personal likes and dislikes play here. The blood feud between Roland and Ganelon is central in the text (Pantazakos 47). Indeed, the crucial issue at heart here is that personal wars were an integral part of the medieval chivalric code, and "Roland and Ganelon's actions both are to be interpreted as exemplary of this pride" (Haidu 154, Pantazakos 47), and though they both operate with ulterior motive during their feud, the feud must be broken by Charlemagne (or Karl), as emperor.

Charlemagne is legally obligated to settle the feud and make the decision between Roland and Ganelon, and his own emotions ultimately end up making the call. He cannot bear to be parted from his dear nephew Roland, or indeed from any of the 12 Frankish peers that accompany him everywhere, nor can he be persuaded by the wise bishop's offer to use his spiritual adeptness to see into the hearts of the people at Marsile's court in order to determine what is best to be done. No, indeed, it seems that he is simply too *fond* of these knights and this bishop to part with them, while he is more than happy to relieve himself of Ganelon.

Following this logic, it could be argued that it is not Roland's death at the Battle of Roncevaux that is the true tragedy of the story, but rather Charlemagne's own blindness to his emotion and the rash decision that prompted, setting up Ganelon to

commit treason in retaliation to Roland's suggestion that he act as ambassador. It is not the devil, nor even the pagans, that cause the downfall of the Christian army, but the failure of one seemingly perfect Christian king to equally love and value his vassals. Bizarrely, Roland does not even die because of the wickedness of the Saracen foe; he dies because of the jealousy and retaliatory action of his own stepfather. Once we begin to analyze the crusading framework of this narrative, it can be all too easy to get wrapped up in the dualism of the narrative that condemns the Saracen and venerates the Christian and momentarily forget that treason, jealousy, and vengeance ultimately lie at the heart of the narrative.

This reminder might not seem *so* subversive or earth shattering, until we consider that Ganelon is not the only vengeful character in the narrative. No, indeed, if we are to understand the true complexity at play between the seemingly smooth veneer of Christian crusading ideology in which pagans are wrong and Christians are right, we must look more closely at the figures we are supposing to be "right," and question, whether they are not, themselves, bizarrely the instruments of their own destruction as far as this is a tale of tragedy, and the perpetrators of their own thirst for revenge, regarding the motivations behind the battle. For this, let us return again to the figure of Charlemagne and his love for his nephew Roland, whom he loves more than life, and offers him even up to half his army (785) to keep him safe, who cries when he must leave Roland behind in the rearguard: "Sur tuz les alters est Carles anguissus, as porz d'Espaigne ad lesset sun nevold pitet l'en prent, ne poet muër n'en plurt" (823-825). Here, it is as if he has the prophetic ability, even in the *Chanson*, which is not quite as religious as the *Rolandslied*, to anticipate what he cannot possibly know. He already grieves tremendously at the

thought that he *might* lose his nephew because of this treacherous stratagem of Ganelon's. And in fact, when he does learn of Roland's death after rushing back to the pass at the sound of his Oliphant, he plunges into a fit of misery.

It might be easy to suppose that only the original Charlemagne exhibits such *human* suffering. But in fact, Konrad's Karl suffers in the extreme and proclaims that he would give his life for Roland's in an instant (6973-6974). His grief is exquisite. He rocks his nephew in his arms and bemoans the loss of his dear kinsman. The description of the sheer depth of his sadness is touching and humanizing, showing desperate grief in one we may have assumed to be too religiously stolid to experience such pain. But the truly interesting portion of his grief lies in his determination to pursue the Saracens. Having mourned deeply for an instant, he immediately falls to the ground, and begs God, not for comfort, but for revenge.

On one hand, the Roland legend is famous for its revenge storyline: Roland recommends Ganelon for the post of ambassador to Marsile, and Ganelon retaliates by setting up an ambush on the rearguard, to which he also appoints Roland. In turn, the emperor, seeing the dead body of his favorite nephew, vows vengeance and attacks the saracen with all his might, killing Baligant and returning victorious in both versions. This reading of the story is by no means new. But I suggest that in analyses of the Roland story, we too frequently focus on one aspect of the story or the other, seeking to understand the justification and function of the crusade on the one hand or getting thoroughly immersed in the revenge narrative, instead of doing the messy work of combining the two sides of the story into one.

This is the crux of Karl's prayer on seeing that his beloved nephew is dead:

Wol du hímlícher herre,
 Der tác derne gewert uns nicht
 Nu sende uns, herre, ain liecht
 Daz wir di rache da genemen (6991-6994).

The prayer itself is beautifully constructed; as the daylight is beginning to fail and night is coming on, Karl prays that God will send them light. Thus far, this might seem like simply a plea for comfort and both literal and metaphorical light in the darkness. But the light Karl prays for in this offer is not one of simple comfort or assuagement of pain; no indeed, he knows exactly what kind of light he wants – he prays for the light to see, so that through that light he can have “rache,” or vengeance.

His prayer no doubt springs from the original prayer in the *Chanson*, as Charlemagne also asks God for vengeance, asking for His help, “Par ta mercit, se tei plaist, me cunsent que mun nevoid pois venger, Rollant!” (3107-3108), explicitly stating vengeance as his purpose in entering in the battle against Baligant. In this sense, we see another moment of more straightforward adaptation, but it is crucial to acknowledge that Karl’s prayer, while it includes the idea of vengeance, is not a direct transposition of Charlemagne’s in the original *Chanson*. It is vastly more eloquent, begging for light to lead him in the pursuit of vengeance, speaking of light in a way that is reminiscent of Joshua at the Battle of Jericho. If anything, his grief seems deeper, his humanity more visceral, in Konrad’s adaptation.

The purpose of this paper is not to condemn Karl’s affection for his nephew, nor even his very human desire to avenge his death. The purpose here is merely to point out the odd juxtaposition, the bizarre gap, between the Karl who tells his peers that they will be honored to go to battle and head straight into martyrdom if need be, in the beginning of the epic, but bitterly laments “ia scolt ir uon grozem rechte leben” (6975) when he

learns that Roland has died, earning his aforementioned place in the choir of martyrs. Karl's complaint that his nephew had every right to continue living is partially just his own lament at the loss of someone he loved so well – but it also flies in direct contradiction to his veneration of martyrdom in the earlier portion of the text, wherein he made it abundantly clear that to die for Christ is the greatest of honors. His lamentation that his nephew had every right to continue living implies that as much as he espoused the ideals of martyrdom for Christ in theory, he does not accept Roland's death easily, and finds some sense of injustice in his passing.

I take no issue with Karl's right to humanity and pain here; I merely point out that the sublimity of his suffering and the violence of his proclamation lies in direct odds with the conceptualization of a completely perfect crusader king who can see all suffering in the context of progression towards salvation in heaven and expose a more human vein within a text that we often look at without moving beyond the ideological norm it seems to present. In these scenes, Charlemagne and Karl do not echo the sentiments of Roland, the fealty-obsessed (albeit impetuous) nephew, who proclaimed that “pur sun seignor deit hom susfrir destreiz” (1111) in the *Chanson*, willfully succumbing to all pain and distress that he might encounter in the service of his lord (and by extension, his Lord). Instead, in both adaptations, the more idealistic, perfect crusader king has been presented a bill of fealty from his Lord, and it is one he finds it hard to pay. This is particularly interesting within the context of the enormously idealized Karl, who can, at moments, seem somewhat removed from all characters, as he is separated from them not only by his royal rank, but more explicitly by Konrad's allegorical representation of it. But Karl's love for his nephew is completely integral to his decision to pursue the final battle. He naturally

transforms his personal desire for vengeance into a preapproved campaign of violence against the Saracen, but we must not forget the humanity that serves as his true motivation.

Here, through the bitterness of Charlemagne and Karl's suffering, both the *Rolandslied* and the *Chanson* reveal that there is a much darker, more complicated truth behind the smooth veneer of ideal knights and crusade ideology presented in the framework of the texts. The true fire that prompts Karl's ultimate campaign for the utter destruction of his foe is not a simple command from God, but rather, the unbearable suffering of losing his dear nephew to this foe. Even Karl does not seem to lament that the Saracens in the final battle will not convert to Christianity, but rather to rejoice that "si sint zu der helle geborn" (8582). This transformation, from his initial desire in the text to serve the kingdom of God, to his utter delight at condemning them to eternal damnation can only suggest the very depth with which his soul yearns for revenge.

Both Charlemagne and Karl are torn, partially committed to God and partially ruled by their own humanity. The conclusion of the text and the trial of Ganelon only make this more interesting, as we carefully examine to what extent the heavenly or the human controls desire and motivation in the figure of the emperor. Interestingly, despite the certain guilt of Ganelon, Charlemagne does not encounter a court that is utterly willing to condemn him to death. In contrast, he finds that "tuz li sunt faillid" (3815), as nearly his entire court believes that Ganelon can simply return to his post and serve in good friendship and fealty. Charlemagne seems upset by this in both texts, suffering great "doel" (3817) in the French. The trial proceeds in much the same manner in the German, up to this point, but in the German, Karl ends up pronouncing the ultimate judgment of

God when his court will not condemn the traitor. He threatens that “di chrone scol ich mere denne nicht tragen” (8820) if Ganelon is not condemned. Here again, despite the extreme idealization of Karl’s character throughout the text, the narrative reveals his humanity. While on the one hand, his threat to renounce the crown shows that God has shown judgment, this could also be read as his caving to emotion as well as his inability to effectively influence his court. Luckily for him, he is saved again by the influence of God in this final act, as Thierry and Pinabel ultimately decide to fight a duel to determine whether Roland or Ganelon was right, following the concept of trial by battle, which is shown in both texts, but elaborated upon in the German, which depicts the battle as one between David and Goliath, as Roland’s champion is smaller than Ganelon’s,

da bi sculn wir merke,
 Daid was uil lutzeler gescaft
 got selbe gap ime di craft,
 daz er Golie daz houbit abe sluc (8846-8850)

but nevertheless wins. The medieval theory in operation in both the *Chanson* and the *Rolandslied*, was that whenever two champions fought on the behalf of opposing parties, the party in the right would receive divine aid, thus winning the tournament. Konrad’s edition takes this even further, however, by bringing up the analogy between David and Goliath and making Roland’s representative less physically likely to win the battle without the help of God. In both editions of the text, Thierry wins on behalf of Roland, but Konrad’s watching court even more explicitly proclaims this, not just as a good judgement, and worthy in God’s sight, but moreover, miraculous like the Biblical stories, exclaiming, “te deum laudamus” (8992). To take this one step further, Ganelon is executed on the day of Saint Silvester in Konrad’s text, marking the end of the year, and cleansing the realm before the beginning of a new year. In the conclusion, all is well.

God has saved the day, and once again events have confirmed the stark existence of black and white, of right and wrong. But even in this concluding event, there is great complexity. The right won, but God had to directly intervene yet again. The text presents a didactic framework thoroughly rooted in dualism, and an almost staunch religious belief in its title characters, who are in turn, presented as exemplars. And yet these exemplars are not always fueled by the crusade itself, no matter how many times they praise God, and when carefully examined, these texts serve, not simply to reconstruct an ideological framework of what spurred the crusades idealistically, but also reveal the battles within the battles of the crusades, the doubts and desires and human emotions that spurred crusaders to do what they did and fight as they fought.

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